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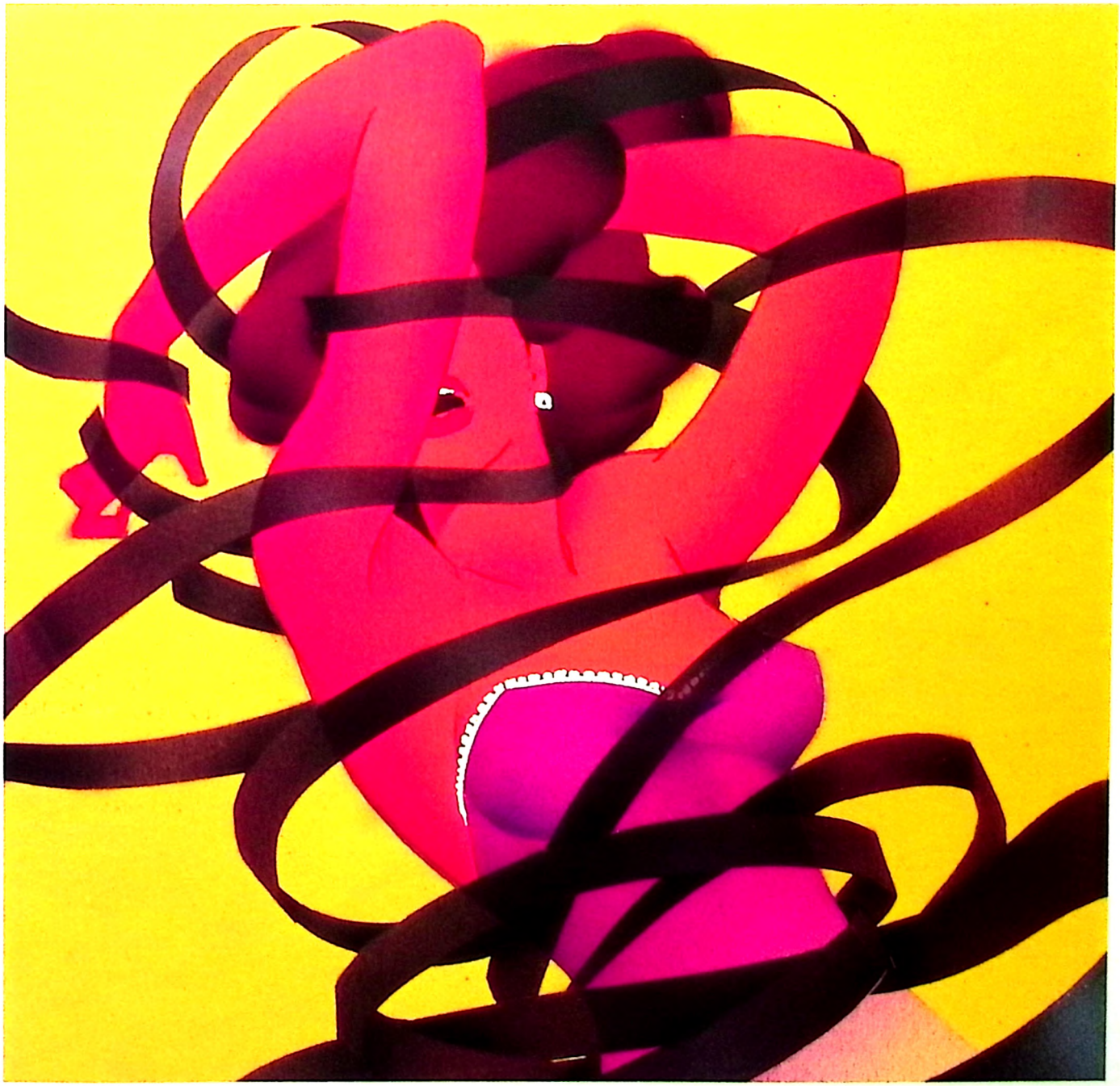

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Cover illustration by
JOSEPH SZOKOLI
(1913 - 1981)
Hollywood Detective
November 1946

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From the Editor...

In this issue, illustration historian David Saunders outdoes himself again as he returns with TWO fantastic new features! His cover story concerns the life and career of Joseph Szokoli, who you may remember from issue #29 in conjunction with pulp artist H.J. Ward. While Szokoli is probably best known for "retouching" a few dozen Ward cover paintings, he was also an accomplished illustrator in his own right, and produced many stylish and memorable magazine covers during his career. Of particular interest is Szokoli's role in the nascent comic book industry, which David explores in this article.

Saunders' second feature is an in-depth profile of Walt Reed, a man who should need little introduction to readers of this magazine. Walt's influence on the world of illustration history is unparalleled, and I've wanted to feature him in these pages for many years. Walt's landmark book *The Illustrator in America* provided the foundation for much of my early knowledge of illustration history, and has always served as one of the inspirations for *Illustration*. I used to visit the Illustration House in the late-1980s, and I always found Walt to be a generous host, willing to share his time with anyone who happened to walk in the door. David's interview reveals much about Walt's evolution, his time with the Famous Artists School, and the early years and development of the Illustration House Gallery.

Last but not least, author John Osier returns with a new article profiling Irish artist Harry Clarke, a true master of the macabre. As the leaves begin to fall and the days grow shorter, his spectral visions seem entirely appropriate for this time of year!

Daniel Zimmer, Publisher

Original cover illustration for *Hollywood Detective*, November 1946. Airbrush on board

Joseph Szokoli, circa 1946

JOSEPH SZOKOLI (1913–1981)

by David Saunders

Sixty-five years ago a new look suddenly appeared on the covers of Harry Donenfeld's post-war pulp magazines. The November 1946 issue of *Hollywood Detective* had a nightmare image of a sensuous brunette menaced by a coil of sinister film. She twists in agony as if in a dream. The end of the movie film whips past our view close enough to reveal that each 35mm frame has a tiny scowling skull with an empty hourglass. Customers who bought pulp magazines from sidewalk newsstands at that time were undoubtedly puzzled by this indecipherable pictogram. Had the Specter of Death finally been caught on film? Aside from the baffling imagery, the unaccustomed sight of airbrush art on a pulp magazine would also have confused regular readers. At that time airbrush art was more commonly featured on trendy European fashion magazines and high-class paperbacks. Airbrush was a useful tool for modern artists to create streamlined forms of antiseptic purity, but those were not the kinds of "forms" one expected to find on a pulp. This cover had a modern synthetic design composed of hyper-stylized graphic elements set against a striking yellow background. The image had more in common with Man Ray's sexual surrealist photo-collages, which designer Alexi Brodovitch had brought to *Harper's Bazaar,* or with Gerald Gregg's graphic style, which designer Lloyd Smith had brought to the Dell "Map Backs." Such fashion-conscious art directors were revolutionizing American illustration with a domesticated breed of the radical ideas of modern art. By 1946 the cultural ripples of those shocking European trends had even reached the sales-conscious mind of the publisher Harry Donenfeld, when he was trying to figure out the best way to redesign and reinvigorate popular interest in his pulp magazines. Over the ensuing years many pulp art fans have wondered about these unique airbrushed covers with Surrealist imagery. They have studied them closely and noticed a finely printed block-letter word in the lower left corner. But rather than explain any mysteries, that one inscrutable word only raised yet another question that has remained unanswered for far too long—"SZOKOLI?"

Hollywood Detective, November 1946

Joseph "Joe" Szokoli was born March 30, 1913 in New York City. His father, John Szokoli, was a Hungarian Jew born September 7, 1878 in Budapest and immigrated to America in 1907. His mother was Gisela Hirsch. She was an Austrian Catholic born October 14, 1886 in Vienna, who came to America in 1908. They met in New York City and were married on April 26, 1908. At first they lived in a rented apartment at 335 East 31st Street, where their son John was born August 18, 1910. In 1912 they moved to a bigger apartment at 527 East 78th Street, where Joe was born a year later. Their new apartment was between York Avenue and the East River on the Upper East Side in a predominantly Hungarian section of Yorkville. The area was colloquially known as "Little Hungary." The neighborhood had Austro-Hungarian theaters, breweries, restaurants, bakeries, and groceries, all of which provided local residents with typical Hungarian products that were needed to maintain a healthy cultural identity.

Although Joe Szokoli's father was Jewish, the family was raised with no emphasis on that fact. His mother was the dominant domestic influence, so the whole family attended Sunday service at Saint Stephen Catholic Church on East 82nd Street. The sons attended a local Catholic elementary school, and after the sixth grade they each enrolled in neighborhood public schools.

Life was tough for children of poor immigrant families growing up in New York City tenement slums along the East River. Thanks to enterprising real estate developers, the area was also acquiring a growing number of sophisticated hi-rise apartment buildings with glorious views of the river. These modern luxury towers of glass and steel were constructed in the midst of rundown slums, which were filled with kids and river rats that were literally stuck in the middle of an American class conflict. This historic struggle was memorably portrayed in Sidney Kingsley's famous play, *Dead End,* which was a depression era social commentary on the attraction of gangsters to city kids living in slums. The gritty realism of Kingsley's play reflected the actual situation of many poor city kids in New York. The stage setting for the play was quite similar to the block where Joe Szokoli spent his childhood years, a dead end street on the East River. He shared his block with an odd social mixture of tough hoodlums dangling from piers, killing rats with sling shots, as well as fancy doormen opening limos filled with rich socialites and lavish lifestyles. On Joe's block the river seemed to provide the only breath of fresh air in his life. He and his older brother John explored their local shoreline, despite the danger of overstepping the boundary lines of neighboring gang territories. The Szokoli brothers were particularly fascinated by the private watercraft that glided by on the river. It seemed like the clean white boats were at liberty to sail away from all the earthbound filth, hassles, and hardships that poor families endured. Joe and John Szokoli were soon dreaming of building their own boat. They were happy to lend a hand, even without pay, to any boat owner that tied up to a local pier and needed help with cumbersome maintenance chores. Joe and John belonged to a local gang of pals that made model boats and sailed them on strings in the choppy river. They didn't have an official clubhouse or belong to an organization for kids, so they just built their toy vessels at home workshops. Their long-term plan was to make a real boat and go rowing on the river. They didn't want a fancy speedboat. They were only interested in do-it-yourself boat building. His pals were also interested in cars and engines. One guy even had a busted-up motorcycle, which everyone took a turn trying to rebuild. John Szokoli once found an abandoned canoe and dragged it into the super's yard. He cut off the stern and mounted an outboard motor on the back. He was wildly acclaimed with hysterical cheers from the whole gang when he had the nerve to ride his hybrid craft around the pier on East 78th Street.

At first Joe's father was a barber at a local shop, but he soon joined a fancy company that owned the concession for the Grand Central Terminal Barber Shop. After a few years the management promoted him to work at another shop the company owned in the lobby of the Waldorf-Astoria Hotel. Many famous celebrities and dignitaries stayed at the hotel, and when they visited New York City on business trips they all needed to look their best for important meetings. This created a constant demand for a large stable of barbers. The Waldorf-Astoria was the first hotel in America to offer deluxe room service, and along with ordering food and drinks, pampered guests were also treated to the luxury of ordering a barber, a manicurist, or a bootblack sent up to their room. Thanks to this arrangement Joe's father happened to cut the hair of many famous people, such as Wild Bill Hickok, President Woodrow Wilson, and the notorious prohibition mobster Frank Costello, who became his regular customer. A unique trust often develops between a barber and his customer. A barber is allowed to overstep the limits of accepted social perimeters. Only a barber is permitted to look over our shoulder as we gaze into the mirror and discuss in confidence our desired self-image. Through his work at the Waldorf-Astoria barbershop Joe's father developed a strangely intimate acquaintance with many important people. These contacts inevitably led to greater prosperity for the Szokoli family. It is customary to give the barber a tip, but during the outrageous excesses of the roaring twenties, Joe's father also received different kinds of extravagant tips. He even got a few inside tips regarding the stock market, the racetrack, or the boxing ring, when the fix was on.

Frank Costello was accustomed to visiting the Waldorf-Astoria barbershop every day for a shave and a weekly haircut and manicure. He was reputed to be a prohibition mob boss, and he was also renowned to be a generous tipper. During his widely reported trial for tax evasion the barbers at the Waldorf-Astoria were subpoenaed and asked to specify the exact amounts of his customary tips. Like good little soldiers, each barber faithfully swore under oath that Frank Costello always gave a tip that was equal to the standard one-sixth of the bill. The case was dismissed.

Through hard work and privileged connections the Szokoli family soon outgrew the tenement slums of "Little Hungary" and moved to a nicer home. In 1928 they moved to an apart-

Sam Weber

James Gurney

William Joyce

Jon Foster

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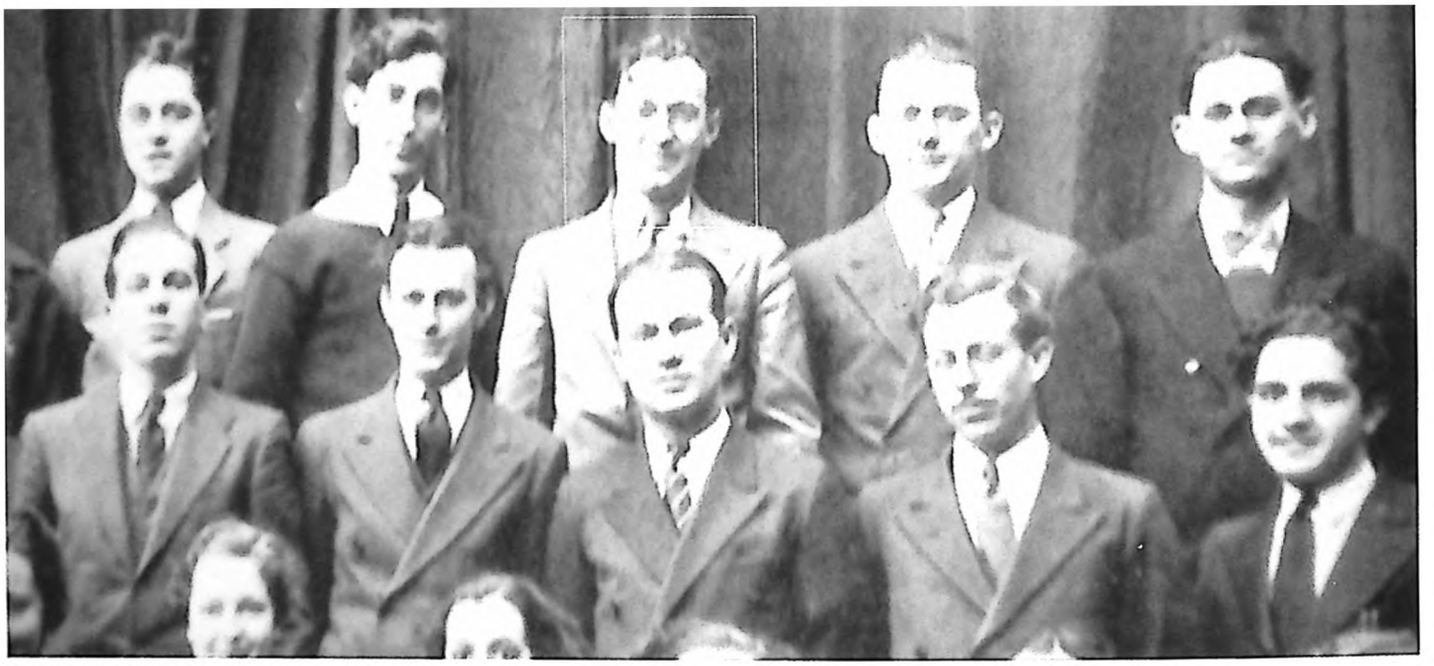


Joe Szokoli with his classmates at Pratt Institute, 1934

ment building at 30-17 34th Street in Queens, NY. This move allowed the brothers to spend time together messing around with boats at the nearby Astoria Yacht Club. Joe was still in school, but his brother John had already graduated and was working for a Wall Street stock brokerage. The most important sign of their new prosperity was the second-hand yacht the brothers bought and began to restore on weekends.

Joe was also interested in the new technology of radio. He studied the literature and built his own crystal sets with specially modified equipment. He seemed to have a real knack for electronics. Eventually he got an early black-and-white television set and whenever it broke down he unfolded the schematic, took everything apart, and restored it to life. His heroes were Thomas Edison, Michael Faraday, and Nicola Tesla. He was a home hobbyist, but even though he spent a lot of time in his workshop with electronics, radios, and boats, he was not a social recluse. In fact he looked exceptionally debonair in his class photos, with a hairstyle and dapper clothing that reflected his father's job as a fashion conscious barber at the Waldorf-Astoria.

In June 1931 at the age of eighteen Joe Szokoli graduated from DeWitt Clinton High School, which at that time was located in Hell's Kitchen on Tenth Avenue and West 58th Street. 1931 was a remarkable year. It was the second solid year of the Great Depression, but it is was also the year that the Empire State Building was completed and opened to the public. The world's tallest building had been erected on land that had previously been occupied by the world's largest hotel, the Waldorf-Astoria. The hotel had been torn down to make way for the Empire State Building, and the new Waldorf-Astoria Hotel was moved to a midtown Manhattan location as part of the new Grand Central Station Complex. All three of these historic buildings are now preserved as landmark cathedrals of Art Deco. The day before Joe graduated high school he wore his snappiest suit and visited his father's barbershop in the Waldorf-Astoria for a final trim before the big event. As soon as he entered the lobby of the hotel he was magically transported out of a whirling gritty metropolis and into the epicenter of *moderne* cosmopolitan glamor.

While much of New York City was overrun with the unemployed masses of the Great Depression, midtown Manhattan was a fantasyland of streamlined modernism. It was as if his father was a barber on the world's coolest zeppelin. Joe Szokoli graduated high school and became a modern man in the middle of a mechanized pavilion of 20th century high fashion. To underscore his identification with this new generation, he began to sign his name using only block letters, as though he were a professional engineer drafting the blueprints for the future. Even his personal correspondence was entirely written in block letters. A typical artist might have preferred to sign his name with a flamboyant scrawl, but Joe used an impersonal signature of block lettering, SZOKOLI. This reflected his self-image as an inventor of the new machine age. Technocracy was a catch phrase of the avant-garde, who envisioned a future society ruled by merit-based leaders in science and technology. At that time it seemed like a valid alternative to the bloody class warfare that was tearing the industrialized world apart, between Capitalists and Communists.

During his childhood on the Upper East Side he had seen conflict between the super rich and the super poor. Yet another striking parallel of his early years with Kingsley's *Dead End* is that the hero of that play was a young man who thought outside the box and yearned to contribute to the architecture of the future with new designs that would rescue everyone around him from squalid poverty as well as pointless extravagance. *Dead End* was one of the most important plays in America during the Great Depression. It posed one of the decade's most important questions. Will we sit on the sidelines and watch the inevitable drift of our society towards fascism, which ruthlessly exploits workers to benefit the own-

ers and investors in big business, or can we all agree to a vision of a healthier society with a compassionate social conscience? That question was the defining issue of modern times. Charlie Chaplin's classic comedy, *Modern Times*, was based on that same question. The 1930s were pivotal years in which western civilization reconsidered many of our basic ideas about god, time, space, nations, empires, and kings, all of which were challenged by shocking developments in politics, science, anthropology, psychology, and economics. Joe Szokoli came of age in those modern times. The new sciences, technologies, aircraft, electronics, radios, motion pictures, televisions, and the developments in mass media all fascinated him.

By this time his parents were prosperous enough to give him a college education, but instead of enrolling in a prestigious university, Joe Szokoli chose to attend a technical school to become a certified engineer. The School of Engineering at Pratt Institute in Brooklyn was not an accredited college and its graduates did not receive a college education or a college degree. The School of Engineering offered courses in Electrical Engineering, Electro-Magnetism, Mechanics and Machinery, Steam Engines, Radio, Architecture, Aircraft, Industrial Design and Drafting. Freshmen engineering students were also required to take an Introductory Drawing Class, which was taught across campus at the School of Art.

In 1932, during his first year of study at Pratt, the country was struggling through the depths of the Great Depression. After the collapse of the banking system many students were no longer able to continue training at Pratt. Families were suddenly unable to afford tuition. Hard times forced most students to put off higher education in order to look for work to contribute to their family income. Until prosperity returned, it was increasingly clear that the U. S. economy was unlikely to generate any new construction projects, new manufacturing plants, new home building, new product development, or new employment opportunities for Pratt's many graduating engineers.

On the other hand, Pratt's School of Art was buzzing with sensational news about the fabulous incomes of several recent graduates. Walter Baumhofer, H. Winfield Scott, Rudolph Belarski, Frederick Blakeslee, and John Fleming Gould were all Pratt alumni that were earning incredible wealth as freelance artists in the booming pulp magazine industry. While most nationwide magazines were suffering from a loss of advertising and subscription sales, the pulps were selling cheap thrills to the masses for pocket change. That formula seemed to click, because the pulps were experiencing their most lucrative golden era. Highly competitive publishers carefully guarded the actual sales figures for pulp magazines, but some accounts suggest there were over 4 million monthly newsstand sales of pulp magazines. Scott, Ross, Belarski, Blakeslee, and Gould all returned to Pratt to teach their valuable skills to students in the School of Art. These facts were impressive enough for Joe Szokoli to switch from engineering to art. He regarded this detour as a painful but necessary compromise. It is significant that years later, when asked to write a brief biographical outline, Szokoli chose to mention that he had started out to study at the School of Engineering at Pratt.

In September 1933 he became a full time student at the School of Art, where he crossed paths with many other young artists who would soon start their own successful careers as

Life drawing, 1933

Life drawing, 1933

Sculpture, 1934

Study, 1934

magazine illustrators. These included Lorence Bjorklund, Richard Case, George Gross, Earl Mayan, and A. Leslie Ross. Unlike many ambitious art students, who tried to imagine themselves as the next Dean Cornwell, he saw himself as a professional technician, graphically coordinated and ready to perform any task that was needed to earn a good living in magazine publishing.

By 1934 he was twenty-one years old. His older brother John had married and moved away from home, but Joe still lived with his parents in Queens. His father had worked very hard for the family's financial stability. He was a self-disciplined man and a strict taskmaster. Although Joe and his father shared an appreciation for technology and the sanitary order of modernism, the son had always felt much closer to his mother, who was a warmer and more nurturing person. Unfortunately Joe and his father had grown increasingly estranged after the decision to transfer out of the School of Engineering. Eventually the father and son were not talking. This simmering hostility made their home life difficult. Unfortunately their feud never had a chance for a mature resolution, because on May 10, 1935 his father suddenly died of a heart attack at the age of fifty-seven.

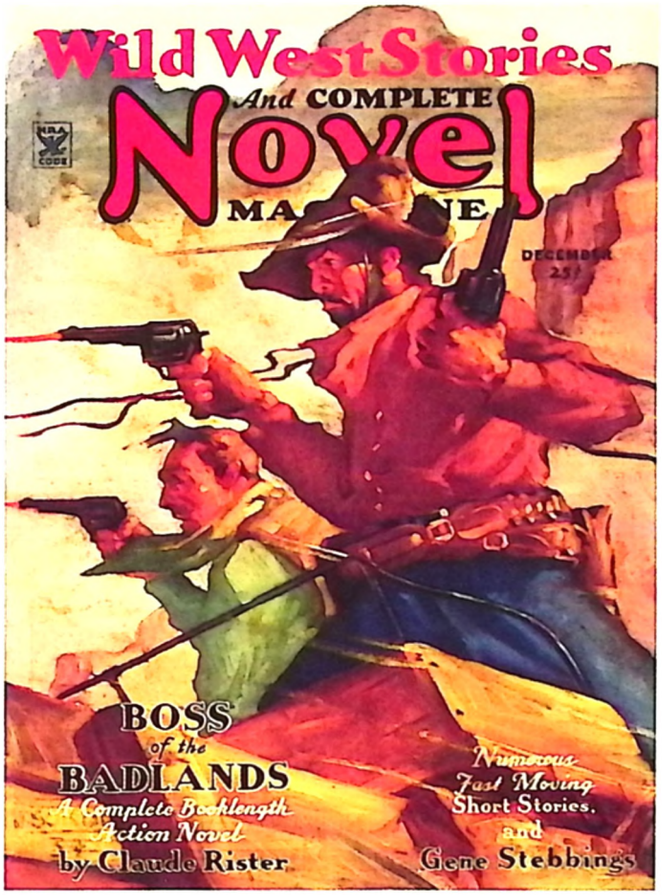
One immediate repercussion from this tragic loss was a new sense of responsibility for his mother's welfare. Joe quit art school and began to focus on earning an income as a professional freelance artist. While a student at Pratt he had studied with H. Winfield Scott, who offered his benevolent introduction to various pulp publishers. Joe Szokoli sold an occasional illustration to a pulp magazine. His first cover paintings appeared on the September 1934 issues of *Complete Detective Novel Magazine* and *Wild West Stories and Complete Novel Magazine*. These magazines were produced by Teck Publications, which at that time was printed by, distributed by, and deeply in debt to Harry Donenfeld.

Harry Donenfeld (1893-1965) was a streetwise hustler from the Jewish slums of New York City's Lower East Side. He had emigrated from Romania in 1900 and had been a street peddler and an errand boy for local mobsters. He joined his uncle's printing business and was reputed to have made a fortune smuggling booze in the hollow cores of Canadian paper shipments. His close friend and reputedly his silent business partner was Frank Costello. The commercial distribution business in America had been taken over by the mob during Prohibition. Donenfeld would often join Costello for his routine daily shave at the Waldorf Astoria. It's impossible to say for certain, but it's a probable twelve-to-seven that Frank asked Harry to extend every possible consideration to the son of his dearly departed barber, John Szokoli. But whatever the reason, almost all of Joe Szokoli's subsequent illustrations appeared in Donenfeld pulps, such as *Spicy Detective, Spicy Mystery, Spicy Western*, and *Spicy Adventure Stories*.

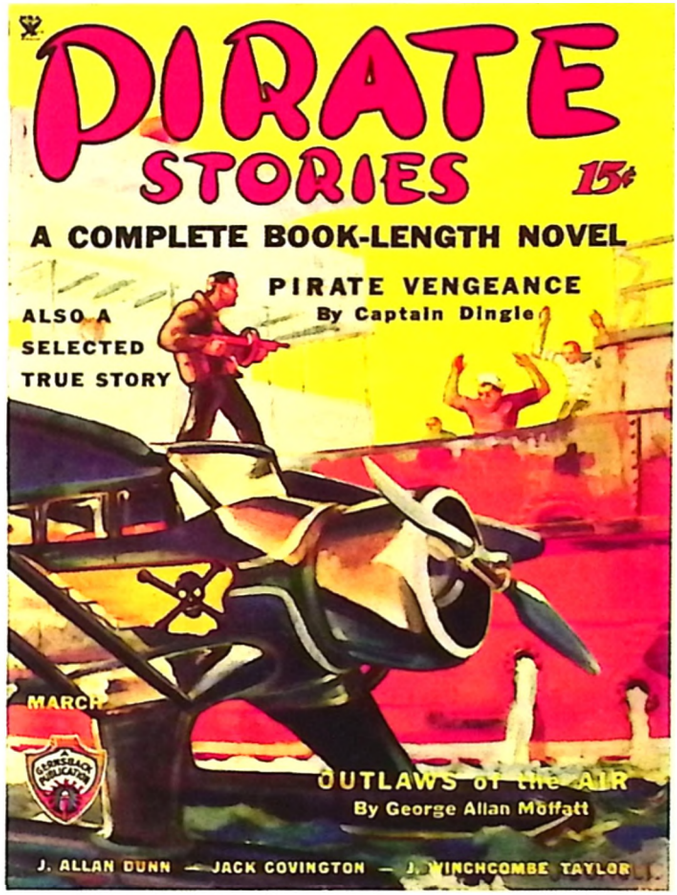
Almost all of his work for the next few years were pen-and-ink story illustrations. Most pulp artists preferred not to step backwards from painting color covers to drawing

Complete Detective Novel Magazine, September 1934

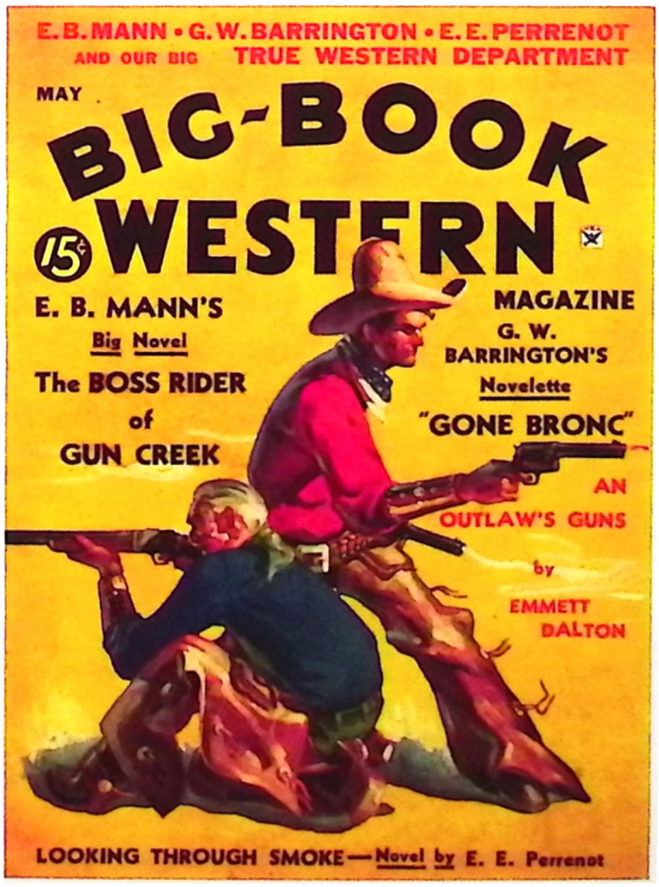
Wild West Stories and Complete Novel Magazine, September 1934



Wild West Stories and Complete Novel Magazine, December 1934



Pirate Stories, March 1935



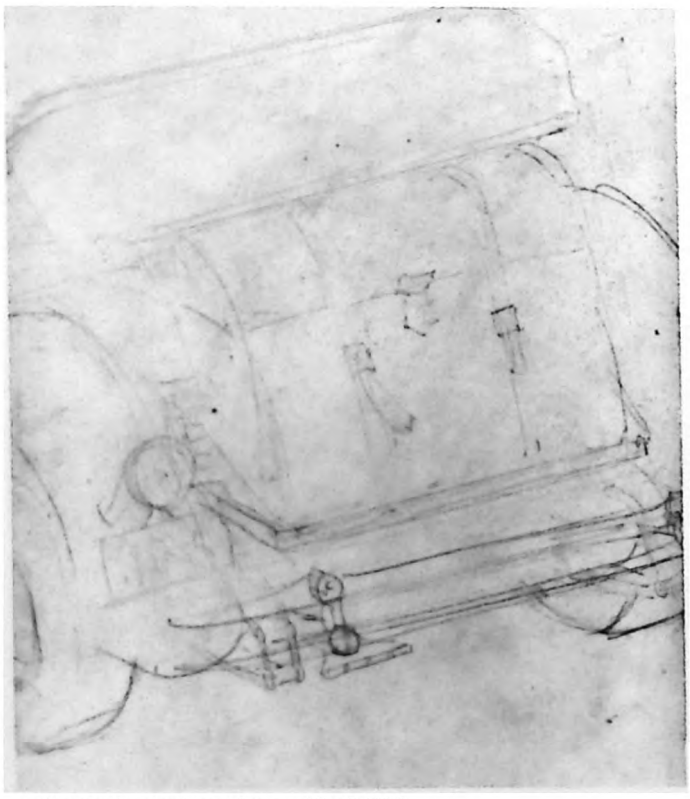
Big Book Western, May 1935

Double Action Western Magazine, May 1935

Preliminary drawing for a pulp cover, March 1935

Preliminary drawing for a pulp cover, March 1935

black-and-white interiors, because they followed the common plan to use the pulps to launch a more lucrative career in slick magazines. Pulp magazines paid much less than slick magazines, but only the pulps were open to entry-level artists. Many recent art school graduates visited the offices of pulp magazine publishers to show art editors prospective freelance art. If their work was any good, or if the artist was persistent enough, they might make a few low-paid sales. After a few lucky breaks, a freelance artist might accumulate a portfolio of published examples that would impress an art editor at a slick magazine. In this way most artists preferred to move up the industry's pecking order. However, a few of the less talented, less ambitious, or more practical artists appreciated the financial reality that it was easier to draw three interiors in one afternoon and make $25, than to work on a cover painting for two weeks and earn $75.



Preliminary drawing for a pulp cover, March 1935

Many of Szokoli's earliest pen and ink story illustrations include unusually detailed drawings of specific mechanical elements: tools, machinery, vehicles, and architecture. A less technically minded artist might have drawn an evil saboteur's workshop with a roughly sketched jumble of mechanical shapes, but Szokoli drew machinery with an engineer's perspective. His illustrations of gizmos and gadgets have convincing details, such as an oxy-acetylene regulating gauge with a properly threaded safety cap. His unique orientation as a thwarted industrial designer is also reflected in his interest in creating hand-lettered titles for many of the stories he illustrated. Very few pen-and-ink artists who worked in the pulps did that.

Most of the stories he illustrated for the Spicies involved scenes of potent sexual tension. The borderline of socially permissible sexuality moves back-and-forth over time. It is not an unbroken line of progressively increasing tolerance. In fact the popular culture of the early 1930s was in some ways more risqué than it is today. One important factor in those fluctuations was an ongoing conflict between Harry Donenfeld, whose profits came from pushing beyond the bounds of decency, and defenders of morality, such as the Catholic League of Decency, who counter-attacked with publicity campaigns against smut peddlers. The more the public bought Donenfeld's pulps the wealthier he became, and that wealth allowed him to mount a more powerful legal defense. Obscenity is difficult to legally define, so his opponents shifted their attacks from courts of law to the court of public media.

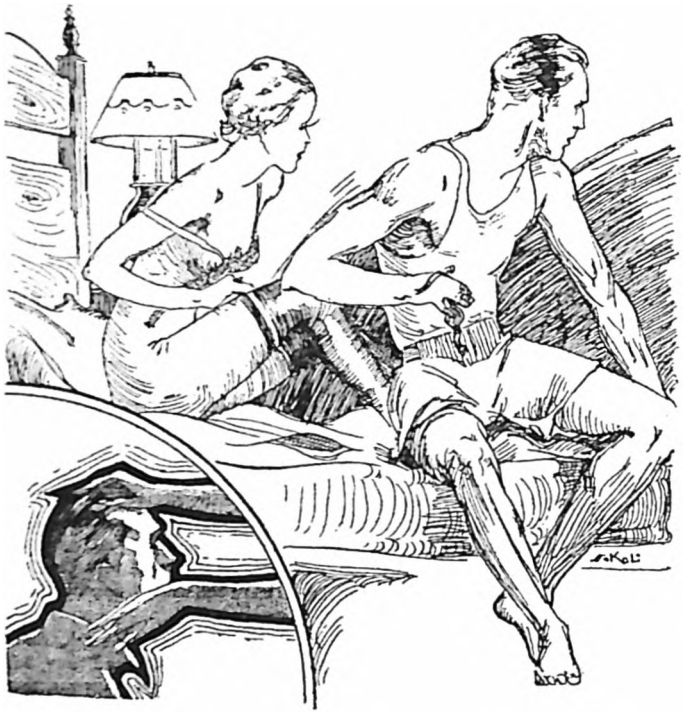
Underworld Detective, May 1935

Snappy Romances, June 1935

New Western Magazine, July 1935

W. C. TUTTLE — F. C. ROBERTSON — HARRY S. DRAGO
SEPTEMBER
NEW WESTERN 15¢
MAGAZINE
A GLENN WICHMAN Novel
W. C. TUTTLE'S New "Happy Hay" Novelette
OUTLAWS OF PARADISE
Novel by
E. E. PERRENOT
FRANK ROBERTSON'S New Novel, "TAKE-A-CHANCE McGEE"
THE LAST OF THE WILD BUNCH, by HARRY S. DRAGO

New Western Magazine, September 1935



Interior illustration for *Spicy Mystery Stories*, October 1935

Interior illustration for *Spicy Mystery Stories*, October 1935

Donenfeld's business was harassed for several years by political enemies, who staged grandstanding events for the newspapers, news-radio, and newsreels.

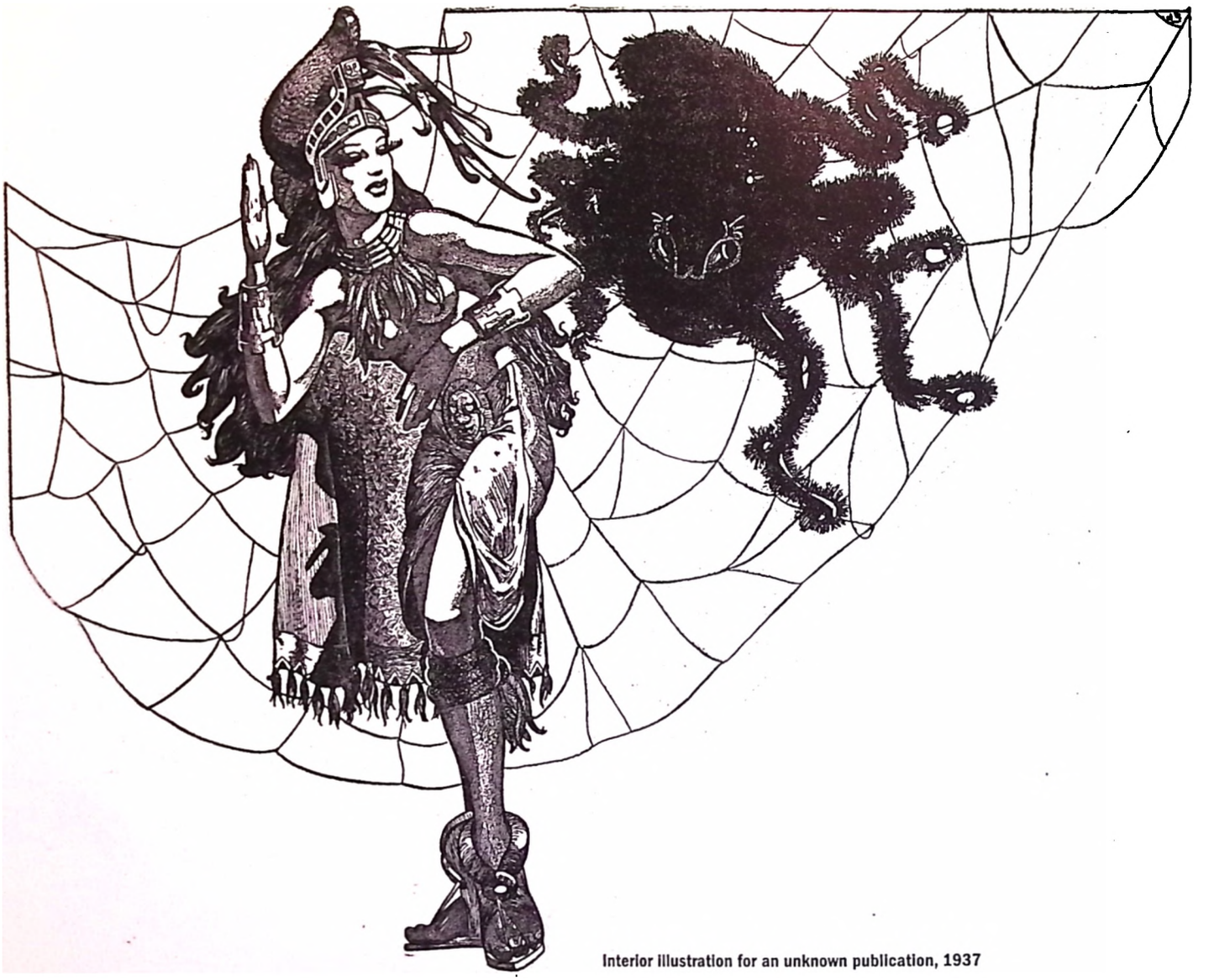
Nevertheless, Donenfeld was a very successful publisher and his business rapidly expanded. The more magazines he published the more complex it became to assemble the titillating artworks, the sexy pin-up photos, and the spicy fiction that was the bread and butter of his magazine empire. That management task was almost overwhelming until Adolphe Barreaux (1899-1985) proposed a cheaper way to supply all of the black-and-white interior story illustrations and retouched photos Donenfeld needed. Barreaux was a sophisticated New York artist of Belgian ancestry. He had grown up in the world of NYC advertising. While still a senior at DeWitt Clinton High School (twelve years before Szokoli) he worked part-time at the J. Walter Thompson Advertising Agency. He continued to work at various ad agencies, even while attending the School of Art at Yale University from 1920 to 1922. Barreaux had risen to the top as a full partner in three consecutive ad agencies. When he was a partner at Thayer & Barreaux Artist Agency he worked in theatrical advertising for the burlesque theaters where Donenfeld's magazines were sold, titles such as *Pep*, *Paris Nights*, and *La Paree*. Barreaux was very ambitious, so in 1934 he started his own art agency at 101 West 46th Street in midtown Manhattan. He soon became Donenfeld's most trusted art director. Donenfeld's office was nearby at 125 East 46th Street, and his print shop, Donny Press, was near 46th Street, at 653 11th Avenue. All of the freelance artists that had previously sold pen-and-ink line art directly to Donenfeld were now redirected to the nearby Barreaux Art Agency, where they were paid less money and were forced to hand over a ten-percent agent's fee. In exchange they were given a guarantee of steady year-round work. Many artists were grateful for this opportunity, including John Kenneth Battefeld, Carl Buettner, Raymond Albert Burley, Paul Hans Jepsen, Henry Carl Kiefer, Harry Lemon Parkhurst, Jay McArdle, Max Plaisted, Paul Harry Stone, and Joe Szokoli. When Szokoli delivered his first finished assignments to Barreaux, he offered to work part-time as the studio's general graphic artist, doing layouts, paste-ups, mechanicals, and lettering. He could even do airbrushing to retouch any errant nipples or pubic hair on the photos of artist's models. Barreaux was grateful for Szokoli's skillful services, and the two began a long and fruitful relationship.

The business relationship between Barreaux and Donenfeld was significant. One remarkable thing was Barreaux's role in convincing Donenfeld to become a publisher of comics. He first suggested the idea in 1933 when Donenfeld tried to revamp the old *Police Gazette*. Barreaux contributed a comic strip about a sexy chorus girl named "Flossie Flip." He later wrote and drew the comic strip *Sally the Sleuth*, which appeared in 1934 issues of *Spicy Detective Stories*. When this proved to be popular it was expanded to other magazines. Barreaux soon designed and directed several sado-erotic comic strips that appeared in Donenfeld pulps, such as *Polly of the Plains*, *Betty Blake*, *Dan Turner (Hollywood Detective)*, *Diana Daw (Jungle Explorer)*, *The Astounding Adventures of Olga Messmer - The Girl with the X-Ray Eyes*, *Marcia of the Movies* (starlet in decadent Hollywood), and *Vera Ray (radiant Sci-fi heroine)*. This last comic strip was named after Barreaux's wife, Vera Marie Zirpolo Barreaux.

Polly of the Plains

POLLY, THINKING SHE HAS KILLED EMANUEL, IS FRIGHTENED OUT OF HER WITS —
OH!
HA!
PANCHO - ON PRETENSE OF GOING FOR THE RANSOM IS STEALTHILY WATCHING THE ENTIRE SHOW TO FIND OUT IF HIS LIEUTENANT CAN BE TRUSTED —
JOSÉ, JUAN, - TAKE THEES PEEG EMANUEL — CUT OFF HEES NOSE AND FINGERS AND FEED HEEM TO ZE BUZZARDS!
POLLY IS THEN CHAINED IN A VERMIN INFESTED 'DOBE HOUSE — SHE IS WONDERING WHAT AWFUL FATE AWAITS HER
?
IF JACK WERE ONLY HERE!
SHE DOES NOT KNOW THAT PANCHO IS SELECTING HIS BEST WHIP WITH A GLEAM NOT STRANGE TO HIS CRUEL EYEB -
I WEEL TAME ZE LEETLE HELL-CAT!
UNTIL HER SCREAMS LAPSE INTO MERCIFUL UNCONSCIOUSNESS

"Polly of the Plains," *Spicy Western Stories*, March 1936



Interior illustration for an unknown publication, 1937

One of Szokoli's regular jobs was to draw *Polly of the Plains*, for which he received printed credit in the masthead. Polly was a cute little Western rancher menaced by evil desperados who ripped off her skimpy clothing as a regular feature in *Spicy Western Stories*. Over the next sixteen years the Barreaux Art Agency placed hundreds of Szokoli's story illustrations in Donenfeld magazines, such as *Fighting Western, Hollywood Detective, Leading Western, Six-Gun Western, Super Detective, Private Detective, Spicy Adventure, Spicy Detective, Spicy Mystery, Spicy Western,* and *Spicy Stories.*

After drawing pen-and-ink story illustrations for several years, Joe Szokoli was asked in 1937 to create covers for five issues of pulp magazines: *Saucy Detective, Saucy Movie Tales,* and *Pep Tee Tales.* He used an innovative combination of tempera paint, cartoon, and accents of swirling vaporous airbrush on all five covers. They were all signed with the same distinctive industrial logo—*JOS.* One issue even listed a printed credit for him on the contents page, but instead of his real name, he used a witty nautical alias, "Jo Shipman." Those five magazines contained stories and illustrations that were reprinted from Donenfeld's other pulps. *Sally the Sleuth* was included, but instead of Barreaux it was drawn by Paul Hans Jepsen, who was listed as the fictitious "Paul Jason." Other interior illustrations were by John Kenneth "Kenby" Battefeld, whose drawing style mimicked the German Expressionism of Lyonel Feininger and Max Beckmann. All five of these 1937 issues are outstanding efforts by Barreaux, Jepsen, "Kenby" and Szokoli to adapt modern European design trends to an American pulp magazine. Little is known about the public response, but for some reason all five titles ceased publication after only a few months, so apparently this modernist experiment was not a tremendous success. The last cover of *Saucy Detective Stories* (August 1937) was painted by Norman Saunders. He later confirmed that the actual publisher was Harry Donenfeld. As with most of Donenfeld's pulps, these five magazines were produced by a front company, which protected his personal investments, while allowing him to take risky business ventures. If the magazines paid off, he would make big profits. If there were censorship problems, or if the magazines sold poorly, he could fold up his tent and escape in the fog. Several of his fake businesses "folded" with unpaid taxes, unpaid creditors, and unpaid writers, who later received only miniscule settlements in bankruptcy court thanks to the fact that Donenfeld had kept his name out of it. He was also

eager to remain incognito to the Catholic League of Decency, Mayor LaGuardia, and the District Attorney.

A front company called Movie Digest Publishing produced *Pep Tec Tales, Saucy Detective* and *Saucy Movie Tales. Saucy Movie Tales* was originally copyrighted by Movie Digest as *Spicy Movie Tales* (see *Catalog of Copyright Entries*, Vol.27, pg. 449). Movie Digest also published *Saucy Stories*. The March 1936 issue of *Saucy Stories* ran an advertisement for a $1 passion elixir, "I DARE YOU! Love Drops," from Pierre Parfumeur in suite #806 of 120 West 42nd Street. *Saucy Romantic Adventures* was supposedly published by Fiction Magazines, Inc., whose address also happened to be suite #806 of 120 West 42nd Street (see August 1936, Pg.4). *Saucy Romantic Adventures* ran "house" advertisements for *Mystery Adventure Magazine*, which was supposedly produced by Pierre Publishing Company of 120 West 42nd Street (see April 1936, pg.4). *Mystery Adventure Magazine* was edited by Harold Hersey. His wife, Merle Williams Hersey, was the editor of *Spicy Stories,* whose address was also listed as 120 West 42nd Street (see *Writers Digest,* May 1930 pg. 53*)*. Spicy *Stories* was published by Merwil Publishing Co., of which Harry Donenfeld was President (see *Time Magazine*, July 31, 1933 pg. 40). Donenfeld also ran a lucrative mail order business in his back-page ads for condoms, diaphragms, and "Dainty Maid" douche kits for "late" ladies. According to Hersey, "We didn't only sell magazines, but also razor blades and other sundry items." All of these overlapping addresses reflect the interwoven nature of Donenfeld's business, which relied on a complex web of interconnecting lawyers, editors, writers, artists, suppliers, presses, distributors, warehouses, truckers, newsstands,

Interior illustration for *Spicy Adventure Stories*, May 1936

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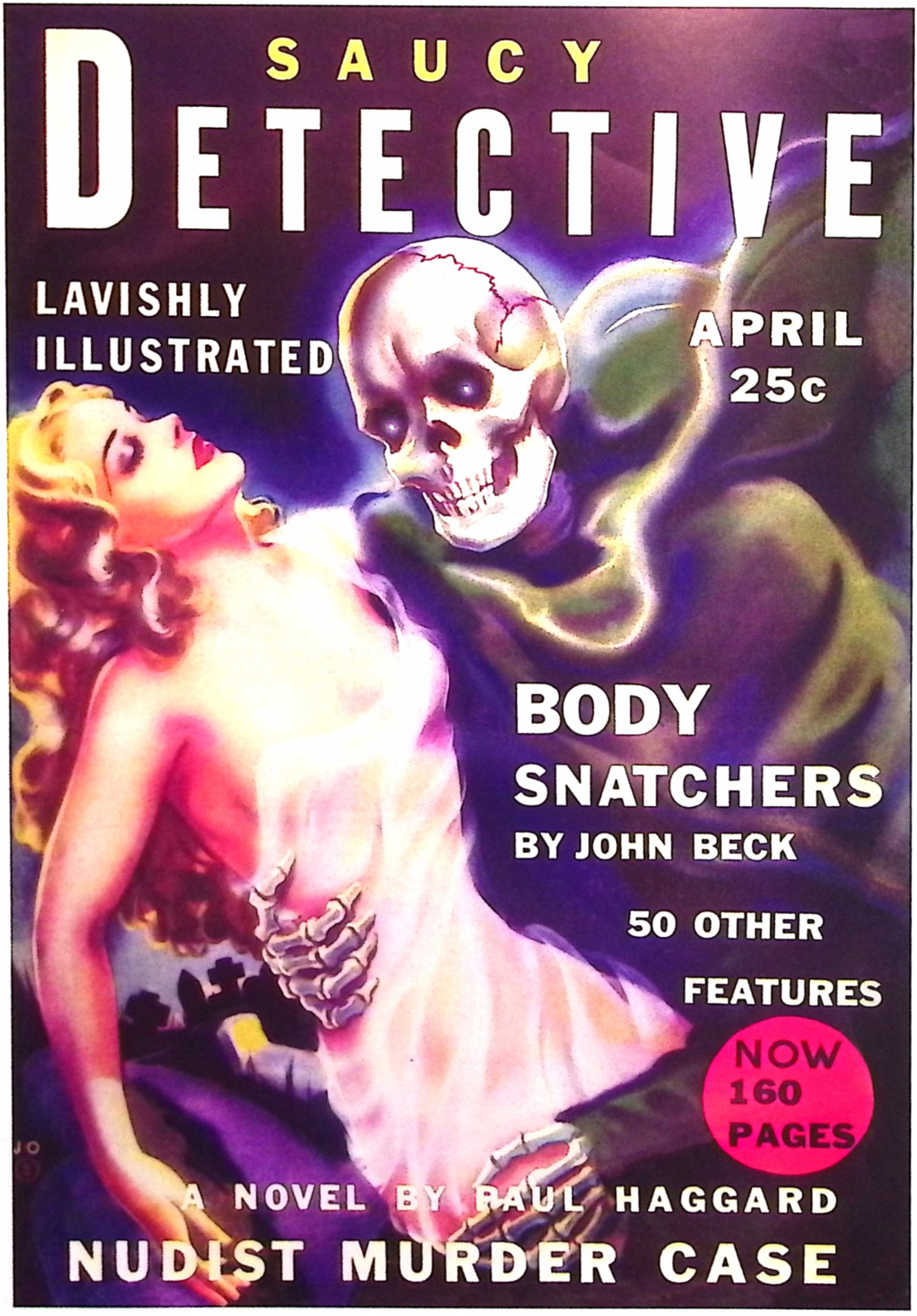


Saucy Detective, April 1937

Saucy Detective, May 1937

Saucy Detective, June 1937

Saucy Movie Tales, June 1937

Pep 'Tec' Tales, September 1937

Interior illustration for *10 Story Mystery Magazine*, February 1942

Interior illustration for an unknown publication, 1938

and old-fashioned Tammany Hall political bosses. One thing was perfectly clear about Donenfeld's fake businesses—he did not want his name connected with them.

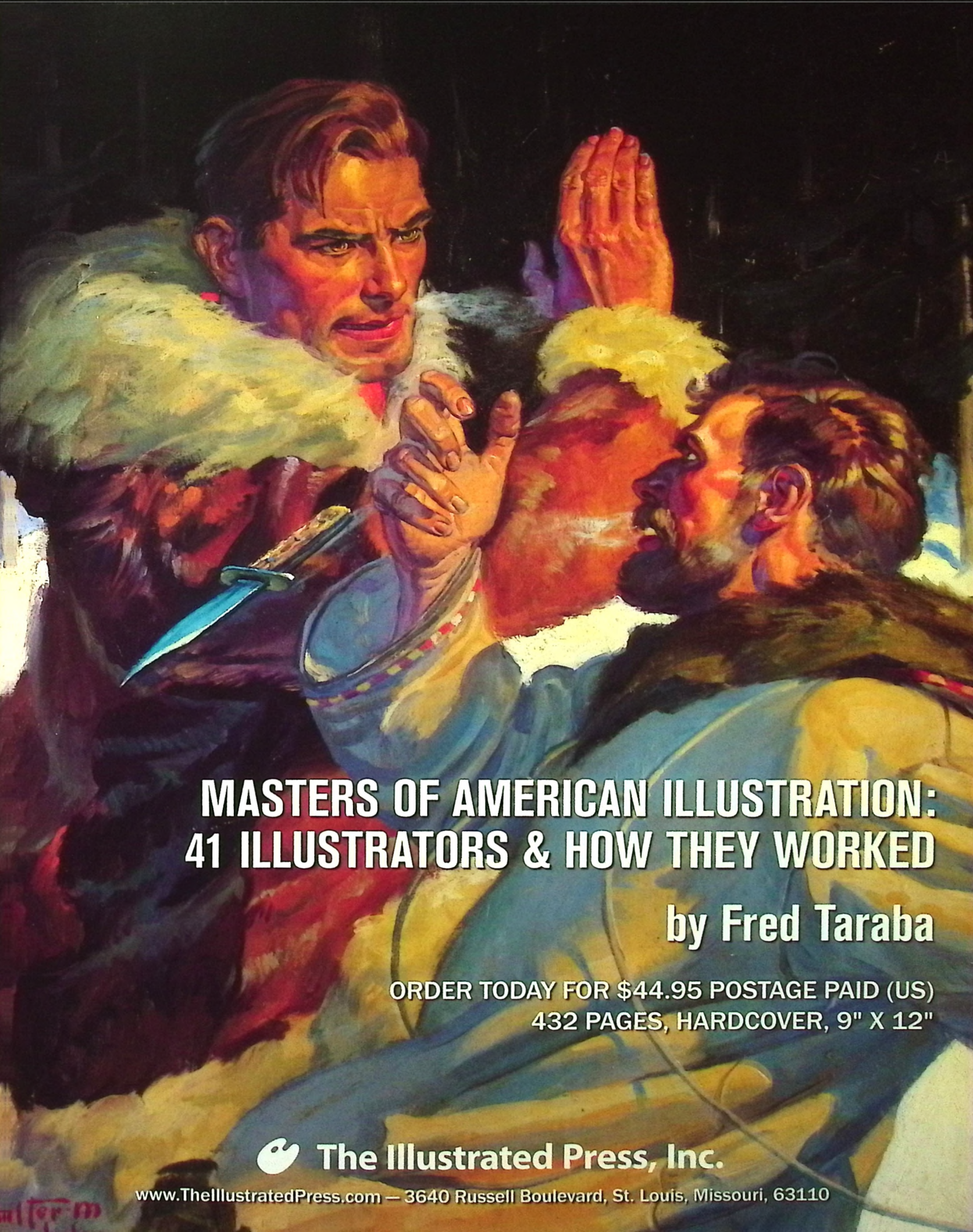
At first Harry Donenfeld listed his own name as the publisher on the contents page of such magazines as *Spicy Stories, Pep, and Gay Parisienne*. But after he was arrested and convicted as a pornographer in 1934, he never repeated that mistake. Years later when he was asked to describe the nature of his prior criminal conviction, Donenfeld testified under oath during cross-examination in Federal Court that he quit the smut business around 1934.

> A: I pleaded guilty for publishing magazines and paid a fine.
>
> Q: Was it supposed to be an improper magazine?
>
> A: It was supposed to have been magazines, which I have discontinued about 1934.
>
> Q: Was it improper?
>
> A: Yes.
>
> Q: Lewd or something like that?
>
> A: Snappy magazines, snappy stories. In fact that was the title of it, "*Snappy Stories*."

Donenfeld was a master of deniability. But despite his many false fronts there are still a few unbroken threads that run continuously throughout his entire shady business. Everything was printed by Donny Press, distributed by Independent News, and illustrated by the Barreaux Art Agency. The fact that Barreaux's artists continually appeared in all of Donenfeld's magazines for more than ten years proves that Barreaux was actually receiving payment consistently. That fact alone is suspicious enough to mark Barreaux as an inside member of Donenfeld's clandestine organization.

As Joe Szokoli continued to create story illustrations his drawing style became bolder and more pronounced. He also experimented with mixed media, airbrush, and use of a litho-crayon to create a grey half-tone effect. Many of his illustrations were unsigned, but because his name was clearly printed in the masthead of *Polly Of The Plains*, he eventually became best known as the cartoonist of this western S&M comic strip.

On April 25, 1937 the *New York Times* reported in an article about the growing popularity of yacht clubs, "By reorganizing the Astoria Yacht Club, which was started in 1909, the new Flushing Bay Motor Boat Club at College Point has been opened by Commodore John Szokoli." Only in the land of opportunity could the first son of an immigrant Jewish Hungarian barber become the Commodore of the old Astoria Yacht Club. As a successful stockbroker and now Commodore,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Spicy Mystery Stories, June 1935. Cover painted by H.J. Ward

Spicy Mystery Stories, June 1939, with overpainting by Joe Szokoli

Joe's older brother had become a man of impressive social status. This was yet another rags-to-riches American dream come true. That fact stood in stark contrast to Joe's claim to fame as the creator of a sadistic comic that appeared in magazines the Mayor of New York City had publicly branded as "filthy smut."

Joe still hoped his tight connection with the Barreaux Art Agency would lead to a lucrative career in advertising. By 1938 the U.S. economy showed signs of recovery, and as soon as mass production regained full strength the related industry of mass marketing would also rebound. That was good news for artists who wanted to work in advertising. Like most illustrators at that time, Szokoli watched and admired the meteoric careers of Al Dorne and Fred Ludekens, who generated the industry's highest incomes by specializing in advertising. That was exactly where he wanted to go—into bigger and better magazines and a wealthy career in advertising.

Barreaux was contracted to provide the interior art, but Donenfeld was in charge of picking the covers. Like all publishers, he had a reverent fascination with the power of cover art to generate sales. Donenfeld's top cover artist was H. J. Ward, but in 1938 a media rival, George W. Trendle, had lured Ward into a time-consuming project to illustrate advertising for *The Lone Ranger Radio Show*. Ward was a freelance artist, and regardless of the effect of his work on newsstand sales, Donenfeld only paid him $50 or $75 for a cover, and he had no intention of paying any more for exclusive rights. When Ward told him in May 1938 that he was taking a long road trip out West to make studies for Trendle's *Lone Ranger* he began to get worried. Donenfeld spoke to Barreaux about his fear of losing leverage over Ward, and they hatched a clever counter plan. If Ward decided to someday quit working for Donenfeld they could still maintain a continuity of cover designs by making altered versions of Ward's previously published canvases. Who better for this experiment than the office photo-retouch guy, Joe Szokoli. He was handed six original H. J. Ward paintings that had already appeared in print and he was told to make them look like new paintings. Donenfeld considered the assignment a minor extension of Szokoli's office job, so he was only paid his regular hourly salary of ten bucks a day. He did all six alterations in one day and Donenfeld printed all six of the revised covers. When Ward returned from his trip out West he was maliciously shown the retouched covers in an effort by Donenfeld to reassert his bargaining dominance.

On the hot summer day of July 15, 1938 Joe Szokoli (age 25) and his widowed mother (age 51) walked up the passenger gangplank of the S. S. Columbus, and set sail for an eight-week trip to their ancestral Austro-Hungarian homeland. Eight days later they docked in Bremen and proceeded to visit Germany, Austria, and Hungary. It was Joe's first trip

Romantic Detective, April 1938. Cover painted by H.J. Ward

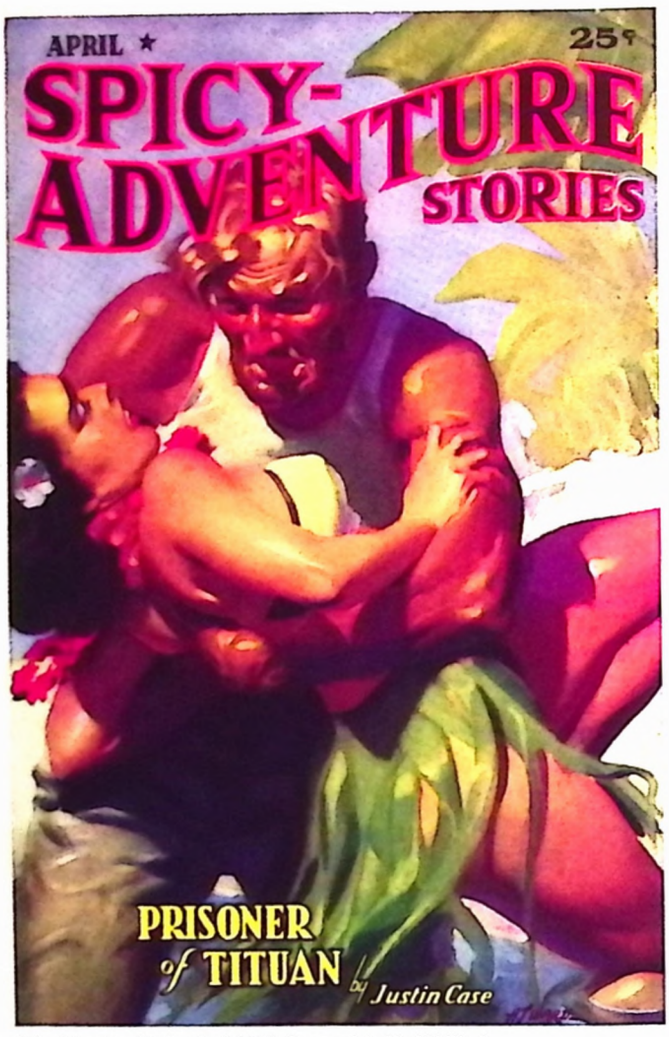
Spicy Detective, March 1939, with overpainting by Joe Szokoli

abroad, but even his mother felt like a stranger in her own hometown. Life in Vienna had entirely changed since Hitler had come to power in Germany six years earlier. Four months before their arrival German troops had invaded and forcibly annexed Austria to the Third Reich as a major first step in world domination. The American tourists were stopped and questioned by Nazi officials as their visas and passports were inspected, processed, and stamped with swastikas throughout their travels across several borders. It might have been just a sightseeing trip, but it happened at the busiest time in Joe's career and at a most horrific time in European history. Since his father was a Jew there may have been more pressing reasons for this extraordinary trip. All that is known for certain is that he and his mother returned to New York City two months later on September 15th, 1938.

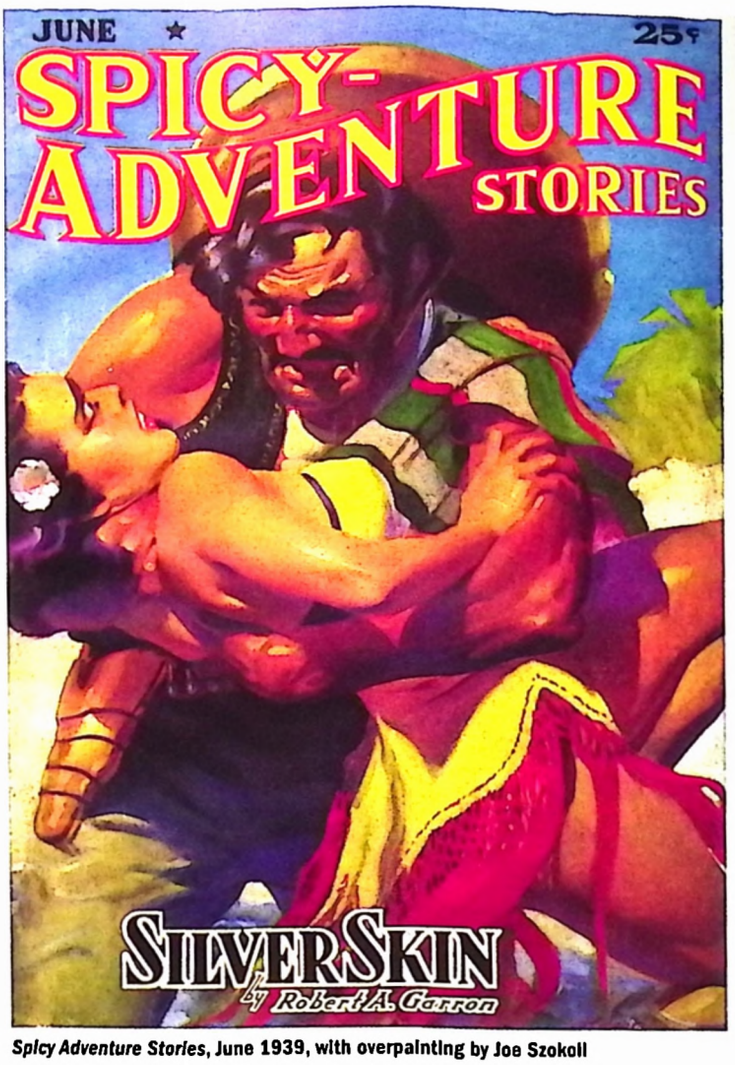
Aside from personal family reasons, the fact that Joe Szokoli chose to drop everything and take an eight-week trip to Europe shows that he had priorities that were higher than his illustration career. A trip abroad can often provide a refreshing objectivity, from which to reevaluate the progress of one's life. In later interviews the artist referred to his work for Donenfeld as only a convenient way to earn good money, while the Great Depression lingered on. He was grateful for the income, but he was still more interested in technical engineering. While Joe was in Germany he bought a professional large-format Leica camera, with which he photographed relatives and made typical tourist snapshots, but more importantly, this cool new camera seemed to rejuvenate his fascination for photography and the complex darkroom techniques of processing and printing. That new Leica seemed to promise an attractive middle ground between the school of art and the school of engineering, where he could built a more rewarding career that involved machinery, engineering, photography, design, airbrush, and photo retouching within the advertising industry.

A few days after Joe Szokoli returned to New York City he visited the Barreaux Art Agency and found out that during his absence a strange visitor from another planet had burst upon the scene. Superman was a smash hit and his impact forever changed the world of popular culture publishing.

Adolphe Barreaux was a seminal figure in the history of comic books. He had been credited in 1935 as an artist and a writer of the first American comic books that used original materials, *New Fun* and *More Fun*. These were produced by National Allied Publications, but they were printed and distributed by Harry Donenfeld, who thereby owned an interest in the company. Just a few weeks before Joe Szokoli left on his trip to Europe they had released *Action Comics*, which featured a new character named Superman. Instead of generating moderate sales for a month or two, *Action Comics* continued



Spicy Adventure Stories, April 1938. Cover painted by H.J. Ward



Spicy Adventure Stories, June 1939, with overpainting by Joe Szokoli

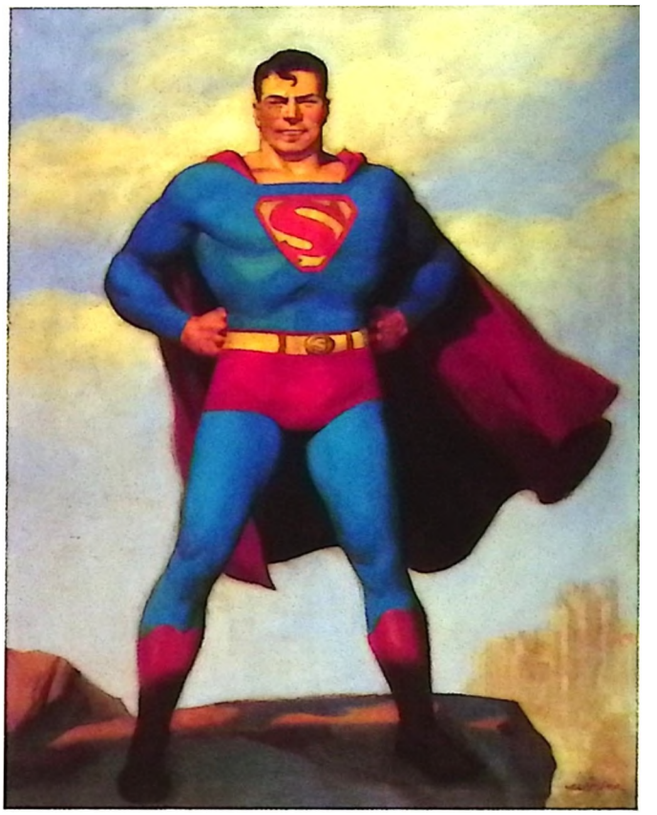
to sell at newsstands faster than Donenfeld could print re-ordered copies. These unprecedented sales caused a sudden rush by other publishers to enter the comic book market. Donenfeld had swiftly grabbed full control of all rights to *Superman* and consolidated his ownership of this sensationally profitable business, which became DC Comics. Towards this end he moved Barreaux Studios to his executive offices at 480 Lexington Avenue, where it was officially listed in the NYC telephone directory from the spring to the fall of that year. The degree to which Donenfeld valued Barreaux's contribution to his comic industry is indicated by this abrupt relocation during those frantic formative months. This heavy-handed move also reveals Donenfeld's silent but controlling interest in the art agency, of which Barreaux was only the titular head. Donenfeld was suddenly making more money from *Superman* than all his other publications combined. He redirected a significant portion of his talent pool to work on various comic book projects. Barreaux found his art agency at the epicenter of a booming industry that would come to be known as golden age comic books. By the time Joe Szokoli returned to work the entire American publishing industry had been knocked off guard by phenomenal sales of millions of *Superman* comics.

1939 was another pivotal year in American history. First and foremost it was the year to celebrate the New York City Worlds Fair, where the dreamland of modernism was triumphantly on display. The Fair's visitors were treated to a hopeful vision of a sane and scientifically ordered World of Tomorrow. The Trylon and Perisphere was the perfect antidote to a nervous public that was recovering from the Great Depression and worried about the looming threat of another world war. Millions of people enjoyed an escape to the World of Tomorrow, just as millions of readers enjoyed a fantasy comic about the Man of Tomorrow. Superman was the most powerful man in the world. He could fly into the threatened Metropolis and restore social order faster than a speeding bullet.

Adolphe Barreaux offered Joe Szokoli the historic opportunity to help draw *Superman*. He grappled with the decision and tried to imagine where the publishing market was going and whether comic books had any long-term potential, or if they were only enjoying a momentary fad. In the end he bet on the wrong horse and turned it down. Years later he regretted missing what he had come to realize was a golden opportunity, but he never fully realized that the day would come when Superman was the only thing that remained from Donenfeld's entire publishing industry. Superman outlasted the pulps. He even outlasted the slicks.

In the spring of 1940 Donenfeld commissioned his top cover artist, H. J. Ward, to paint a full-size portrait of Super-

man. He paid him $150 upon delivery and then hung the finished painting behind his conference table, where it remained as the emblematic prototype of the Man of Steel for the rest of his career at DC Comics. As Donenfeld struggled to maintain dominance of the comic book market he told his lawyers to send intimidating letters to his many competitors to threaten them with lawsuits for copyright infringement. In 1941 he sued Fawcett Publications over Captain Marvel's similarity to Superman. Fawcett was selling even more comics than Donenfeld, so they chose to defend themselves in court. Legal prosecution of this case required DC to provide an ironclad definition of their character's patented qualities. This was not so easy, because in fact Superman had slightly evolved since his first appearance. His chest emblem had grown larger. His dangling forelock had shifted to the right side of his forehead. His once-spunky smile had matured into a sterner expression of patrician approval, and his friendly eyes had narrowed down to a weather-beaten squint. Donenfeld needed to alter Ward's original painting to include all of the 1942 characteristics that were legally stipulated in his copyright lawsuit. In recognition of Szokoli's earlier success at retouching Ward paintings, he was again hired to do this sneaky job. For fifty bucks he painted the prescribed changes during a single visit to Donenfeld's office, and he didn't spill a single drop on the carpet. In retrospect that seems pretty cheap, considering the fact that Donenfeld eventually won the case and bankrupted Fawcett Comics with a $400,000 out-of-court settlement. Besides reinforcing Donenfeld's lawsuit, Szokoli's alterations also extended the lifespan of the Superman painting as DC's officially approved prototype. Most subsequent images of Superman in adver-



***Superman* by H.J. Ward, 1940, with overpainting by Joe Szokoli. Oil on canvas. Photo courtesy of Lehman College, CUNY. Superman is a trademark of DC Comics. All rights reserved**

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Spicy Detective, April 1940. Cover painted by H.J. Ward

Hollywood Detective, February 1945, with overpainting by Joe Szokoli

tising and merchandising closely match the revised painting.

As the storm clouds of war approached, a compulsory military draft was reinstated and Americans mobilized for war. Young men had been the first draftees, but soon older men were needed too. In 1942 Joe Szokoli was drafted at the age of twenty-nine. At that time he was living at 34-06 Jordan Street in Bayside, Queens, NY. He contacted privileged Army officials and prearranged preferential treatment that allowed him to serve in an Army graphic design department to produce instructional filmstrips. However, this plan collapsed when Joe flunked his physical exam. He was listed as 4-F because of a chronic heart condition. He still contributed to the war effort by working at a defense plant. Oddly enough, this new job was really a dream come true. Thanks to his brother the Commodore, Joe was hired to work as a skilled craftsman at the Robert Jacob Shipyard on City Island, in the Bronx. His childhood dreams of building boats were finally fulfilled during the war years. Unlike other factories, where fully automated assembly lines mass-produced jeeps, tanks, aircraft, and battle ships, all construction at the Robert Jacob Shipyard was done by hand. This company built comparatively small wooden PT boats that were immune to magnetic mines. They also built patrol boats, sub chasers, tugboats, and mine sweepers. Joe was delighted to be building boats under the knowledgeable guidance of experienced craftsmen.

During weekends and evenings he continued to produce freelance pulp magazine illustrations as well as any other chores that Barreaux needed done for publishers or advertisers. Barreaux's integral business relationship with Donenfeld is proven by the fact that Szokoli worked exclusively for Barreaux, but during the war years Szokoli listed himself on all official paperwork with the U.S. government as an employee of the Trojan Publishing Company, another Donenfeld front name. By 1942 Barreaux had formally changed his art agency name to Majestic Studios. He still worked with the same bullpen of artists that supplied story illustrations for Donenfeld's pulp magazines, but there was a new concentration on producing material for comic books, such as *Champion Comics*, *Flash Comics*, *Wonder Comics*, and *Exciting Comics*.

On April 13, 1944 Joe Szokoli's illustration career got another big break. H. J. Ward was drafted. Donenfeld freaked out. Like many publishers, he believed his newsstand sales depended primarily on the magnetic appeal of great cover art. His entire pulp magazine line was distinguished by the art of H. J. Ward, so it was vitally important to maintain the continuity of that look. To prepare for this event Donenfeld had previously ordered Ward to work overtime to create as many extra paintings as he could produce, in order to build up a reserve supply. This may have been overtime work, but there was no overtime pay. As usual Donenfeld bought each new cover for the standard price, which by that time was $100. No one knew how long the war would last or if Ward

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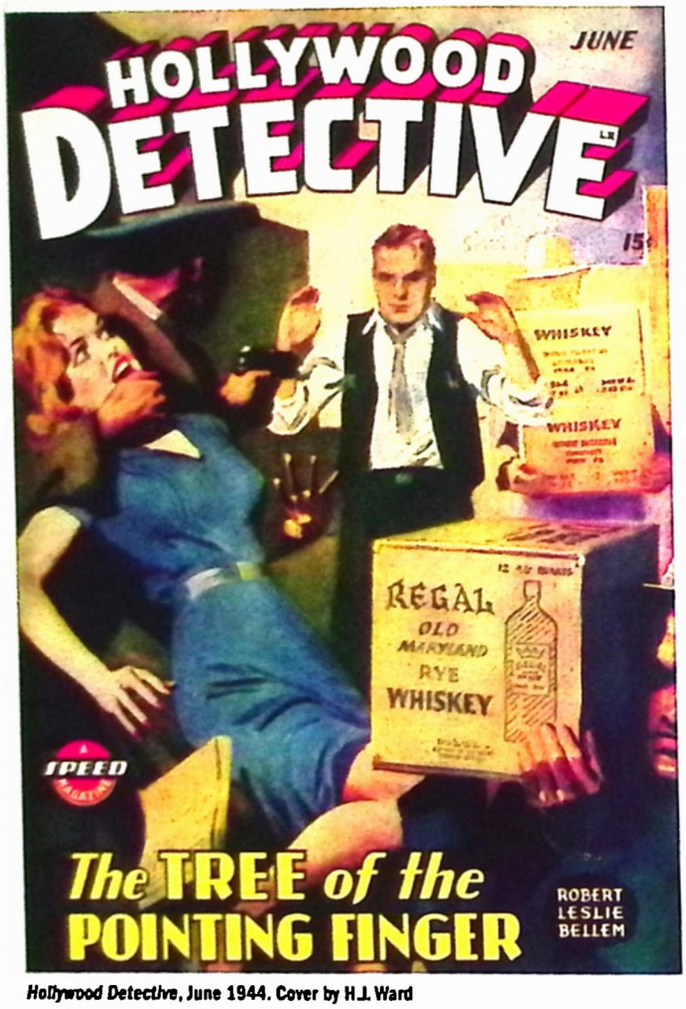


Hollywood Detective, June 1944. Cover by H.J. Ward

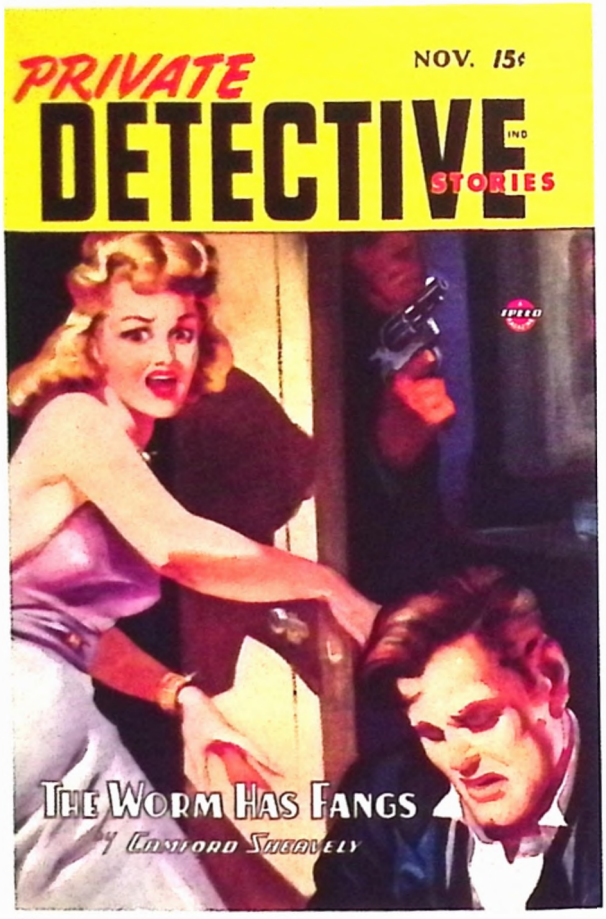
Leading Western, May 1949, with overpainting by Joe Szokoli

would live or die in service, so even though Donenfeld had pre-planned this reserve supply he was still worried about the long-term prospects of preserving the continuity of his most popular cover art. Again, he devised a scheme to further extend his supply of cover art during the war. Plan B was to hire Joe Szokoli to retouch H. J. Ward paintings, just as he had done earlier in 1938 when Ward had gone out West, and again in 1942 when Ward's painting of Superman had to be revised for the Fawcett lawsuit. Szokoli was handed a roll of a dozen un-stretched cover paintings by H. J. Ward, which had already appeared in print. He was told to paint modifications directly on top of the canvases. Szokoli was free to do whatever he pleased, as long as Ward's original men and women were still the stars of the end result. He was also instructed to paint over Ward's signature and not to sign them himself. In this way Donenfeld disenfranchised Ward and also preserved the false impression that Ward had painted the "new" covers. This practical subterfuge extended the appearance of seemingly new and cleverly altered versions of Ward's cover art on spicy pulps for several months. Of course this plan was based on the defacement of Ward's art, and to add insult to injury, Ward received no additional payment for providing the basis upon which these "new" covers were founded.

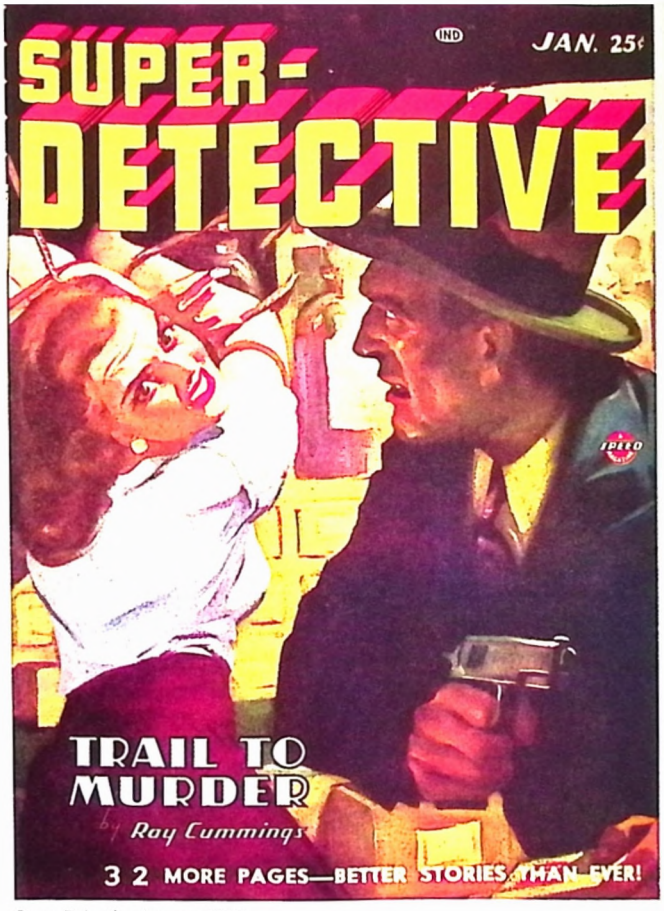
One unfortunate aspect of this scheme was that Szokoli was not technically capable of matching Ward's mastery in oil painting. As a result the over-painted areas of his bastardized versions are noticeably inferior. Szokoli tried to brush up his skills by taking an oil painting class at the Art Students League, but despite his best efforts all he could produce were awkward student-grade oil paintings. Oil painting is considered the most advanced of all techniques taught in art academies. As Leonardo Da Vinci famously said, "painting surpasses all human works by reason of its subtle properties." Some art teachers suggest their frustrated students should only paint subjects they love, and Joe's oil paintings did improve somewhat when he left the classroom and painted seascapes along the shoreline, but he was never good at oil painting. Donenfeld hoped the war would soon end and Ward would return from military service, but the war dragged on. Instead of retouching only a dozen covers, Szokoli eventually altered thirty-eight original H. J. Ward paintings. Some of these "new" paintings were altered only slightly by the addition of a bracelet and earrings, or a different colored dress, but in many others nothing of Ward's original art remain except the faces and hands. Since these hybrid artworks were unsigned and published without credit, their queer discordance has subsequently confused many of Ward's fans and tarnished the reputation of what were thought to be his "late works." This whole deceptive conspiracy finally collided with the cruel indifference of reality on February 7, 1945, when H. J. Ward tragically died from lung cancer during his military service.

Joe Szokoli was a naturally gifted draftsman with a strong drawing style that was self-expressive and distinctly recognizable. He was Barreaux's retouch artist, so he was in charge

Original cover illustration for *Super-Detective*, May 1946, by H.J. Ward with overpainting by Joe Szokoll. Oil on canvas. Photo courtesy of private collection



Private Detective Stories, November 1946



Super Detective, January 1947

of retouching Ward's oil paintings—but Szokoli was essentially a skilled graphic technician. Donenfeld was still determined to find a cheap and renewable source of cover art in the style of H. J. Ward, so he came up with yet another form of plagiarism. Instead of painting directly on top of old Ward canvases, Szokoli was given a binder that contained proof sheets of Ward's covers, from which he was instructed to pick-and-choose images to use as reference material for entirely new cover art that he could make with airbrush on illustration board in his own style. His only creative restraint was that his new covers had to feature Ward's men and women. This was no problem, because airbrush art is created with transparent films, which allowed Szokoli to literally trace men and women from Ward's proof sheets. This new approach was a big improvement for all concerned. Szokoli was free from the absurd pressure to duplicate Ward's masterful skill as an oil painter, and he was able to work in his own natural habitat, which was seated at a drafting table with a pencil, an eraser, an x-acto knife, some tracing paper, and an airbrush.

Joe Szokoli's airbrush

The airbrush technique is dependent on a motorized pump to compress a supply of air pressure to spray a mist of one color at a time. A hand held nozzle finely controls that mist, which is also directed by an elaborate system of stencils that expose or protect various areas of the artwork. The stencil is called a frisket. After spraying, the frisket is removed and discarded. It can be made of many materials, but Szokoli used translucent paper, which was ideal for tracing design elements from his collection of Ward's proof sheets. He then transferred these tracings onto small illustration boards that were about the same size as the proof sheets, which were around nine inches tall. This was much easier than working on Ward's original oil paintings, which were on stretched canvas about 30 inches tall.

Despite all his best efforts, Harry Donenfeld's schemes were only a delaying tactic for his long-term problem. He wanted continuity but he had lost his top cover artist and he needed to find a replacement. Times were changing, sales were down, and he needed to find a new look that would rejuvenate interest and sales. Thanks to Joe Szokoli's wide-ranging skills as a graphic artist he was suddenly Donenfeld's new top cover artist, as well as a trusted member of the Barreaux production team. He had been content to work as a low profile interior story artist, or even to create unsigned cover art in the style of

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Private Detective Stories, February 1949

Hollywood Detective, June 1949

Private Detective, September 1949

Leading Western, December 1949

Original cover illustration for *Leading Western*, October 1948. Airbrush on board

Leading Love, January 1946

Leading Love, March 1946

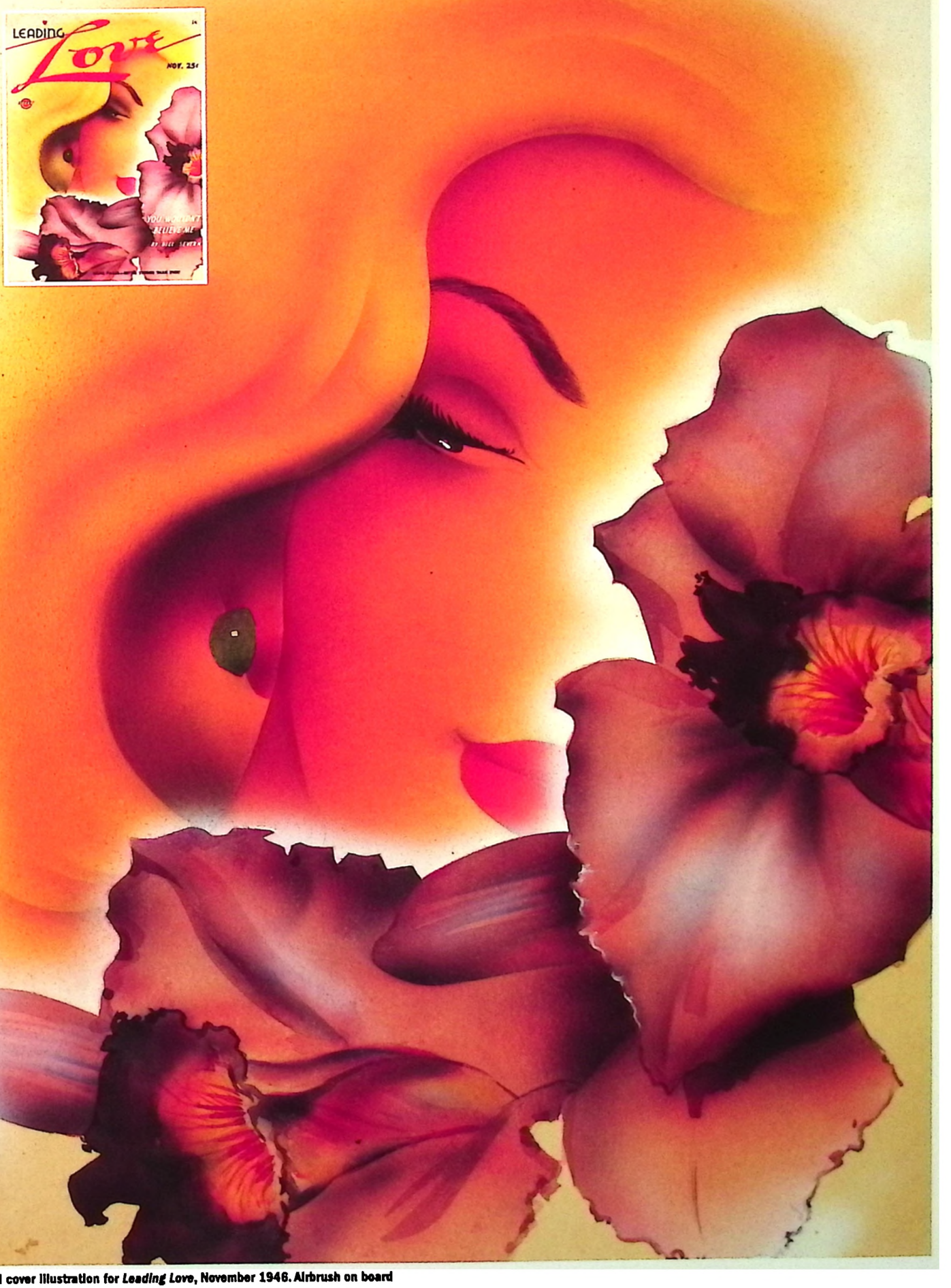
H. J. Ward, but only because he hoped to eventually explore opportunities in advertising. This was his big break. He was suddenly Donenfeld's top cover artist with the creative freedom to invent his own modernist style that he could proudly sign "SZOKOLI," or his streamlined pseudonym, "SOKOLI."

From 1946 onward he created many airbrush covers for spicy pulps. They always featured guys and dolls that were sufficiently similar to Ward to suit the publisher's concerns about continuity. The pulp reading public was never informed of Ward's death, and they eventually accepted the subsequent appearance of airbrushed pulp covers that featured men and women with strangely familiar characteristics. A most striking example of this style is the Surrealist brunette writhing in a menacing tangle of sinister motion picture film on the November 1946 cover of *Hollywood Detective*. Szokoli designed equally radical covers for *Fighting Western*, *Leading Love*, *Leading Western*, *Pocket Detective*, *Private Detective*, *Six-Gun Western*, *Speed Adventure*, *Speed Mystery*, *Speed Western*, *Super Detective*, and *Western Love*.

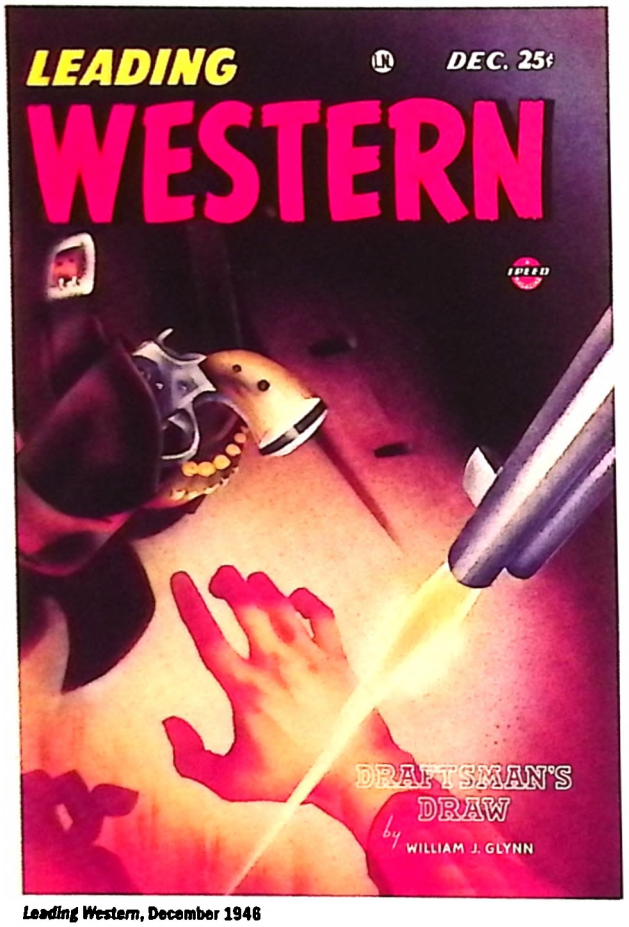
After the War the entire pulp magazine industry experienced financial hardships as the result of paper shortages, dwindling newsstand sales, and ultimately a popular culture audience that preferred to look ahead and forget about the past. This was the climate surrounding Donenfeld's decision to redesign his entire line of pulp magazines with the modern graphic style of "SZOKOLI." Airbrush art had a cool and contemporary look. The following quote from art director Ed Rofheart, who specialized in trendy cosmetic advertising, is indicative of the aesthetic conflict in post-war American popular culture: "I couldn't stand all that pulp stuff. Popular Library was hiring pulp artists to paint their covers, but I was more interested in the designers who were then doing illustrations for magazine ads." Although this struggle between classic illustration art and modernist graphic art was a matter of life or death for many commercial artists at that time, today's post-modern artists are equally inspired by the finest examples from both camps.

In 1949 Joe Szokoli married his wife, Elsa M. Szokoli. She was born January 11, 1912 in Paw Paw Michigan. They moved to a new home that Joe designed and supervised the construction of at 221-19 43rd Avenue in Bayside, Queens, NY. Two years later in 1951 their daughter Maria was born, at which time Joe traded in his old two-door Pontiac sport coupe for the "extra-roomy" four-door family-sized 1951 Kaiser sedan.

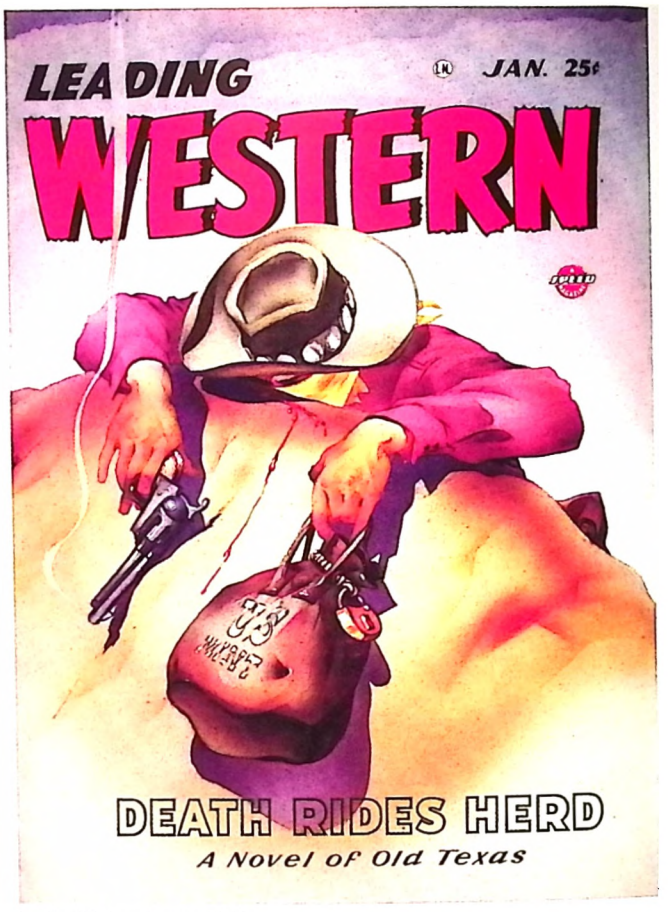
By 1950 Adolphe Barreaux had become editor and co-owner of Donenfeld's pulp magazine division, which at that time was called Trojan Magazines, Inc. The modern design style of Joe Szokoli's covers did help to extend the market for Donenfeld's post-war pulp magazines. But very few popular culture fashion trends last very long. By 1951 there was simply no future for the pulp magazine format. On May 15, Trojan Magazines, Inc. declared bankruptcy under Chapter XI of



Original cover illustration for *Leading Love*, November 1946. Airbrush on board



Leading Western, December 1946



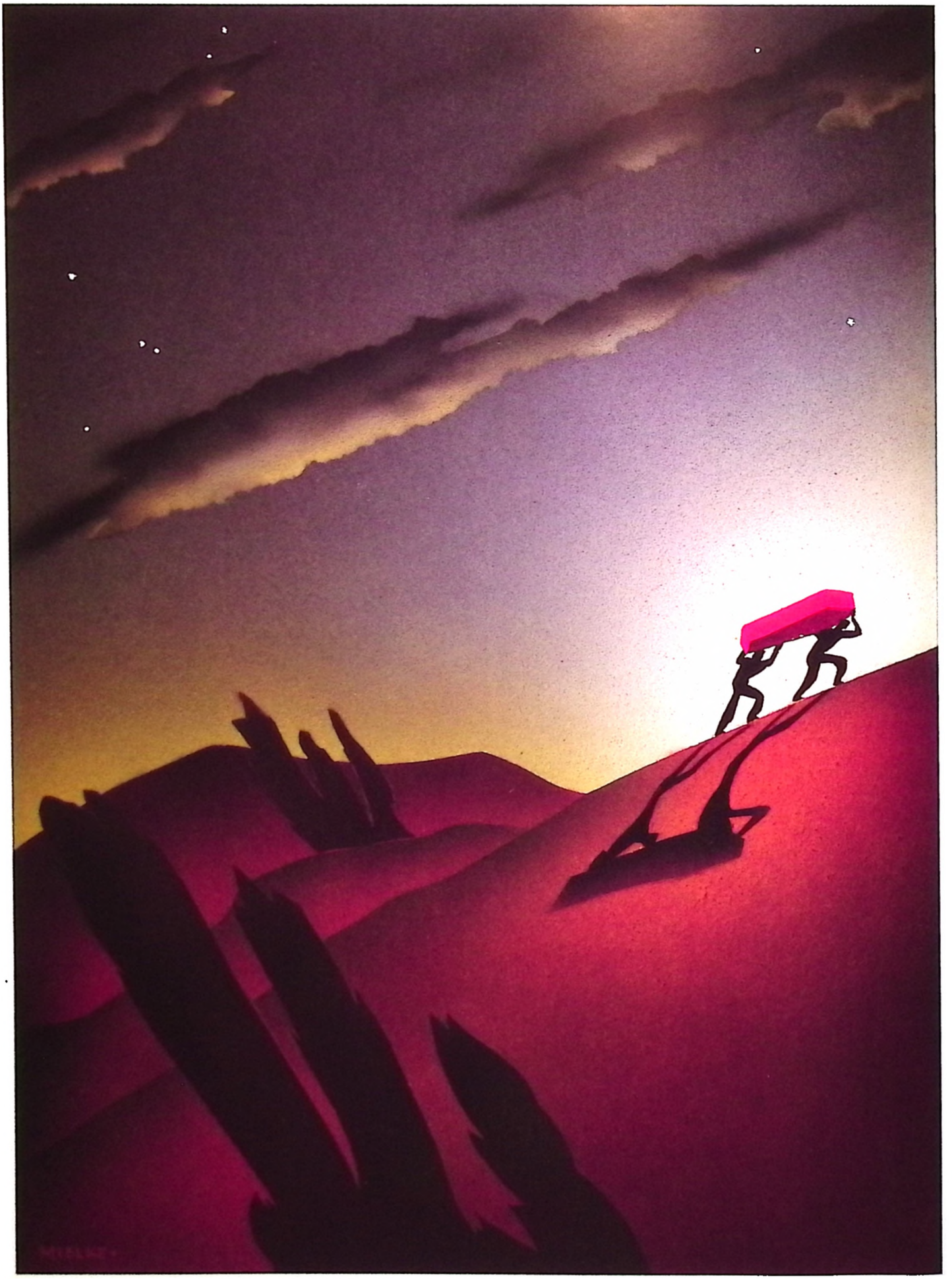
Leading Western, January 1947

New York City's Southern District Court. With $154,120 in liabilities and only $9,786 in assets, Donenfeld's many creditors were forced once again to settle their debts for only six cents of every dollar they were owed. Joe Szokoli rarely talked about it, but whenever he was asked about why the pulps died he always said, "It wasn't the pulps that died. It was illustration that died."

Nevertheless, Joe Szokoli continued to illustrate Donenfeld's other publications even after the pulps all folded. Many publishers of popular fiction were experimenting with new formats in hopes of finding more profitable ways to re-package their same old materials. They tried digest-sized periodicals, slick magazines, paperbacks, hardcover books, comic books, and men's adventure magazines. Donenfeld created Trojan Comics with Adolphe Barreaux as editor. Joe Szokoli was among the artists that drew *Atomic Attack!*, *Indian Fighter*, *Gunsmoke*, and *Captain Science* for Trojan Comics. He also supplied a large portion of the artworks that illustrated Donenfeld's men's adventure magazines, such as *Action*, *Cutie*, *Escape To Adventure*, *Giggles*, *Man To Man*, and *SIR!* Harry Donenfeld produced most of these titles, but he followed his time-honored shell-game tradition by publishing them under a variety of front companies, such as Volitant Publishing, Escape Publishing, and Pictorial Magazines, Inc. The sexual content in men's magazines always gravitated towards the outermost limits of decency. On the other hand, America's proud social conscience has always maintained a strict borderline of censorship to protect our culture from "un-American" corrupting influences. These two opposing forces of sexual liberty and proud morality are constantly in flux thanks to the fact that no two people can agree on exactly where that borderline should be. Like all publishers of men's adventure magazines, Donenfeld had to protect himself and his other business interests from the inevitable scandals. His business interests would not tolerate the sorts of anti-smut scandals and lawsuits that had long plagued him, so he insulated his men's magazines from his larger publishing empire, which included lucrative family-oriented periodicals that were marketed to housewives, sports fans, and innocent kids.

The artists who illustrated men's magazines also tended to use pseudonyms for the same reasons. As Norman Saunders once quipped, "If Martin Goodman doesn't want his *good* name soiled then why should I?" Joe Szokoli used many aliases for his work in men's magazines, but just as often he signed illustrations with his actual name, so his motive was not anonymity. One issue of *SIR!* magazine from 1953 has four different adventure stories and a total of eight illustrations. They were each signed with names of different artists, but in fact Joe Szokoli did them all. This reflects his special role as a contributing graphic designer of the entire magazine. In fact his role had grown so central in the Donenfeld and Barreaux production team that Szokoli's mailing address on his

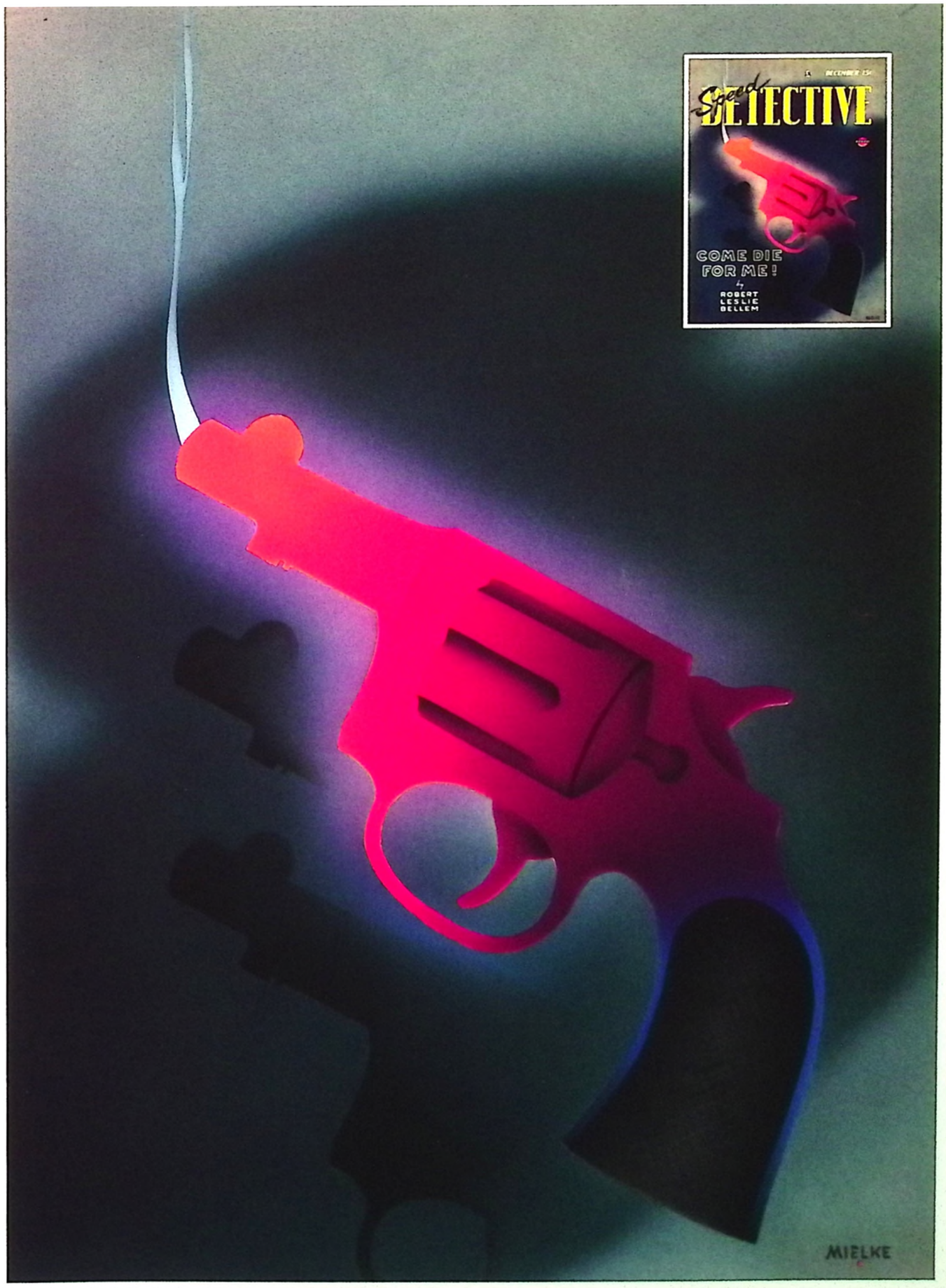
Original cover illustration for *Leading Western*, November 1946. (Signed with the pseudonym "Mielke.") Airbrush on board



Original cover illustration for an unknown publication, 1947. Airbrush on board

Original cover illustration for *Leading Western*, March 1947. Airbrush on board

Original cover illustration for an unknown publication, 1947. Airbrush on board



Original cover illustration for *Speed Detective*, December 1946. Airbrush on board

Cutie, Fall 1946

Giggles, Fall 1946

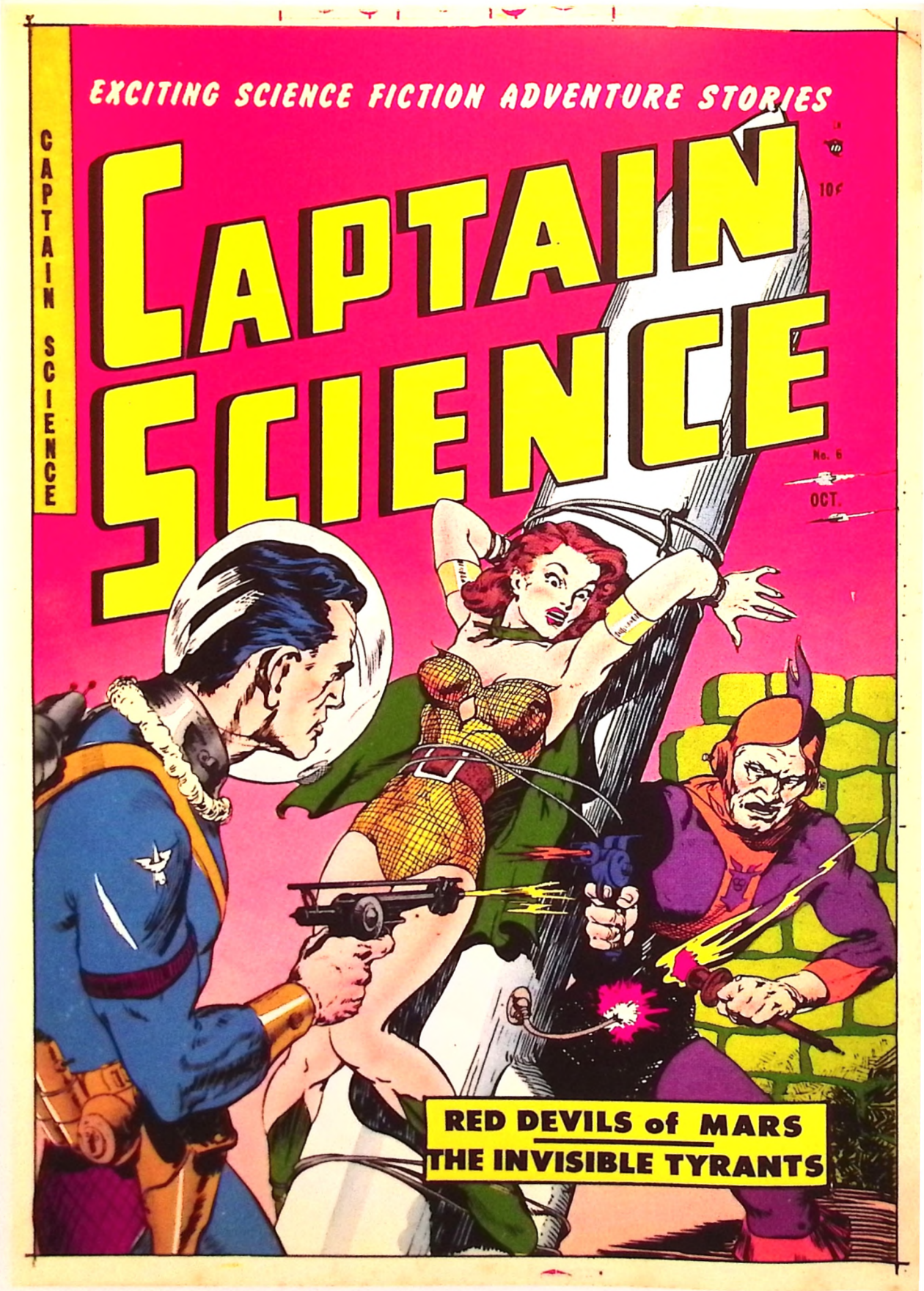
official business stationery was 480 Lexington Avenue, which was actually the business address of Donenfeld's Independent News Distribution Company and DC Comics. To give the impression that there were a host of different talented artists working for the magazine Szokoli used many pen names, such as Mielke, Nicolai, Casey, Giffon, Constantin, Corso, Laurell, and Arkwright. This last alias is the one that makes the most personal sense, because an "ark wright" is someone who builds boats, like a Wheelwright or a Cartwright, which harkens back to his earlier pen name, "Jo Shipman." Another meaningful alias was Nicolai, which undoubtedly referred to the electrical engineer, Nikola Tesla.

Joe Szokoli's most unique quality was his use of mixed media in graphic design, which sprang from his core fascination with technology. Unlike other illustrators, his compositions are often based on an integral involvement with the layout design of the entire two-page spread. These often included airbrush elements, photomontage, text-blocks, and hand lettering. His work for men's magazines used odd combinations of different techniques, such as a pencil drawing with a watercolor wash on top and photographic elements pasted on top with a surrounding vignette of a misty airbrush tone, which was all topped off with a fancy lettering job. He was the only pulp illustrator who thought and worked like a one-man art staff. Most of his men's adventure illustrations appeared in magazines that were inordinately embellished with hand-drawn lettering, splashy two-page layouts, and swanky airbrush effects. A regular freelance artist would just deliver his finished assignments and go home with a check, but Szokoli left a striking imprint of his design style throughout the entire magazine.

By 1956 his first marriage had turned sour and ended in divorce. Five years later in 1961 he married Helen Ashbacher. She was born December 7, 1921 in Wisconsin. They moved to 3311 149th Street in Flushing, Queens, NY, where they raised their only child, Joseph Szokoli, Jr., who was born on January 20, 1962.

As time went on the bulk of his income shifted from freelance magazine illustration to anonymous graphic work for advertising. Thanks to his technical skills in graphics he found a ready market in advertising, which was reinventing itself at the time because of TV's revolutionary effect on mass marketing and mass media. Szokoli followed several friendly contacts in advertising as they landed projects to produce industrial catalogs, quarterly reports, storyboards, and pamphlets for new products. He drew detailed instructional diagrams, did lettering, layout, and he retouched photographs of products. He was a perfect resource for several small-scale advertising designers who needed an economical one-man art staff to provide all the necessary paste-up and mechanical services.

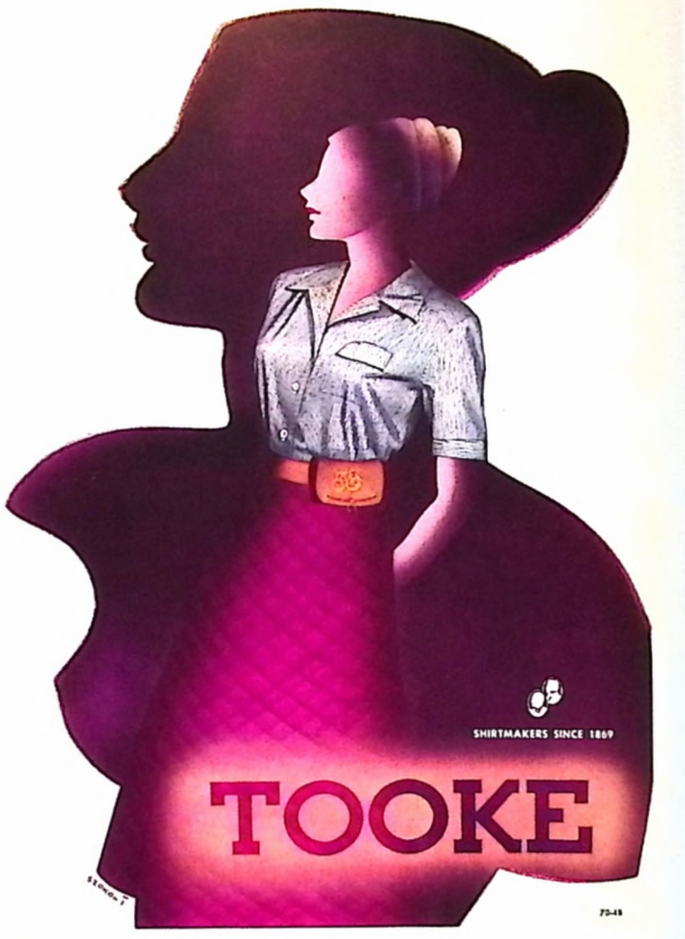
)riginal illustration for an unknown men's magazine, 1950. Gouache on board



Captain Science, October 1951

Original illustration for *Action*, 1953. Gouache on board

Advertisement illustration for Tooke, 1948



Advertisement illustration for Tooke, 1948

Advertisement illustration for Tooke, 1948

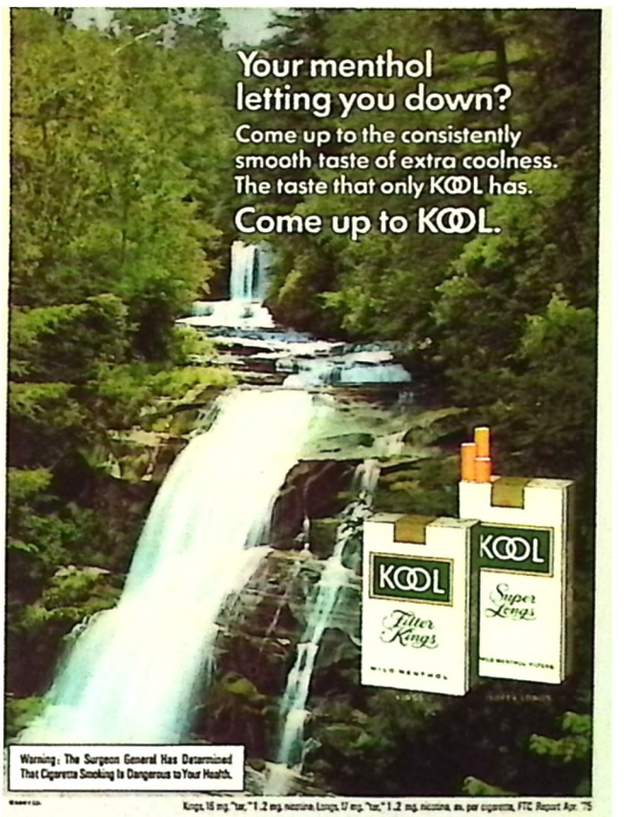
The popular trend in 1960s publishing had moved away from classic illustration and was replaced by graphic design and photography. Almost all illustrators were forced to re-invent their careers. Many artists left publishing to become art teachers, portrait painters, cartoonists, history buffs of the Old West and Indian Lore, aerospace engineers, pornographers, or sign painters. Some of them even painted bubble gum trading cards. Eventually Szokoli's expertise with airbrush was his most valued skill to the publishing industry. He earned more as a photo-retouch artist than he had ever earned as an illustrator. For the rest of his life he was busy in mass media as an anonymous retoucher of photos of ice cubes, brassieres, and bent cigarettes. He had always hoped to find a lucrative career in advertising and he finally found it. He mostly worked with art directors that were independent contractors and only needed him to work on piecemeal projects. He had steady work with three different art directors. He would routinely visit one of their studios every workday, wearing a suit and a tie. He also had a spare art studio at home, which he used for rush jobs or looming deadlines that forced him to work around the clock or over the weekend. He would sometimes work at his home studio if a second art director forced him to moonlight at the same time. In most cases the client asked the art director to design the ad concept, and then a photographer was hired to shoot the accepted idea under supervision. Then the approved photograph was finally subbed out to the photo retoucher, who would "doctor out" all the imperfections.

There was one long running advertisement for KOOL cigarettes that featured a waterfall. The art director liked this one particular waterfall,

No retouching was done.

And as a final concession to those few die-hard skeptics, we asked a notary public to witness the whole thing. He found everything kosher.

Advertisement featuring Joe Szokoli, 1966


Your menthol letting you down?
Come up to the consistently smooth taste of extra coolness.
The taste that only KOOL has.
Come up to KOOL.
KOOL
Filter Kings
KOOL
Super Longs
Warning: The Surgeon General Has Determined That Cigarette Smoking Is Dangerous to Your Health.

Advertisement photo-retouched by Joe Szokoli, 1974

which happened to have a pipeline running through it. He kept on sending his photographer to shoot different views of that same waterfall, until it became a synonymous image for KOOL cigarettes. Each new photo always included the same old pipeline, which required removal by a photo retoucher. Thanks to the popularity of this ad campaign, that pipeline became Joe Szokoli's bread and butter for several years.

In 1966 he made a cameo appearance in a magazine ad as a typical retouch artist. He was shown seated at his drafting table wearing a white shirt and tie with flipped-up magnifying glasses. But in a bizarre twist, his hands are comically tied behind his back. There is a surreal irony in this image, because more than most, this artist was never tied down to one narrow task, thanks to his tendency to offer a wide range of graphic services. In many ways his unique multi-skilled approach to magazine illustration was his means to preserve creative freedom. Joe Szokoli was a jack-of-all-trades in the graphic art department, the hobby basement, the radio shack, or the boat marina.

There was never a formal end to his career, but no one throws a retirement party and gives a gold watch to a freelance artist. He spent his final years doing photo-retouching, and boating on Flushing Bay. He finally got rid of his last boat in 1974 when he realized there were plenty of "suckers" in the Flushing Bay Yacht Club who would pay all the bills to finance his boatbuilding hobby. He loved to work on boats. The marina did not have slips, so the yachts were tied to moorings. The members had to go back and forth in little rowboat tenders, which took quite a beating. Every winter Joe would collect the tenders in the boathouse and take them apart and put them back together and re-caulk them. He did it all happily without any pay. It was just his hobby.

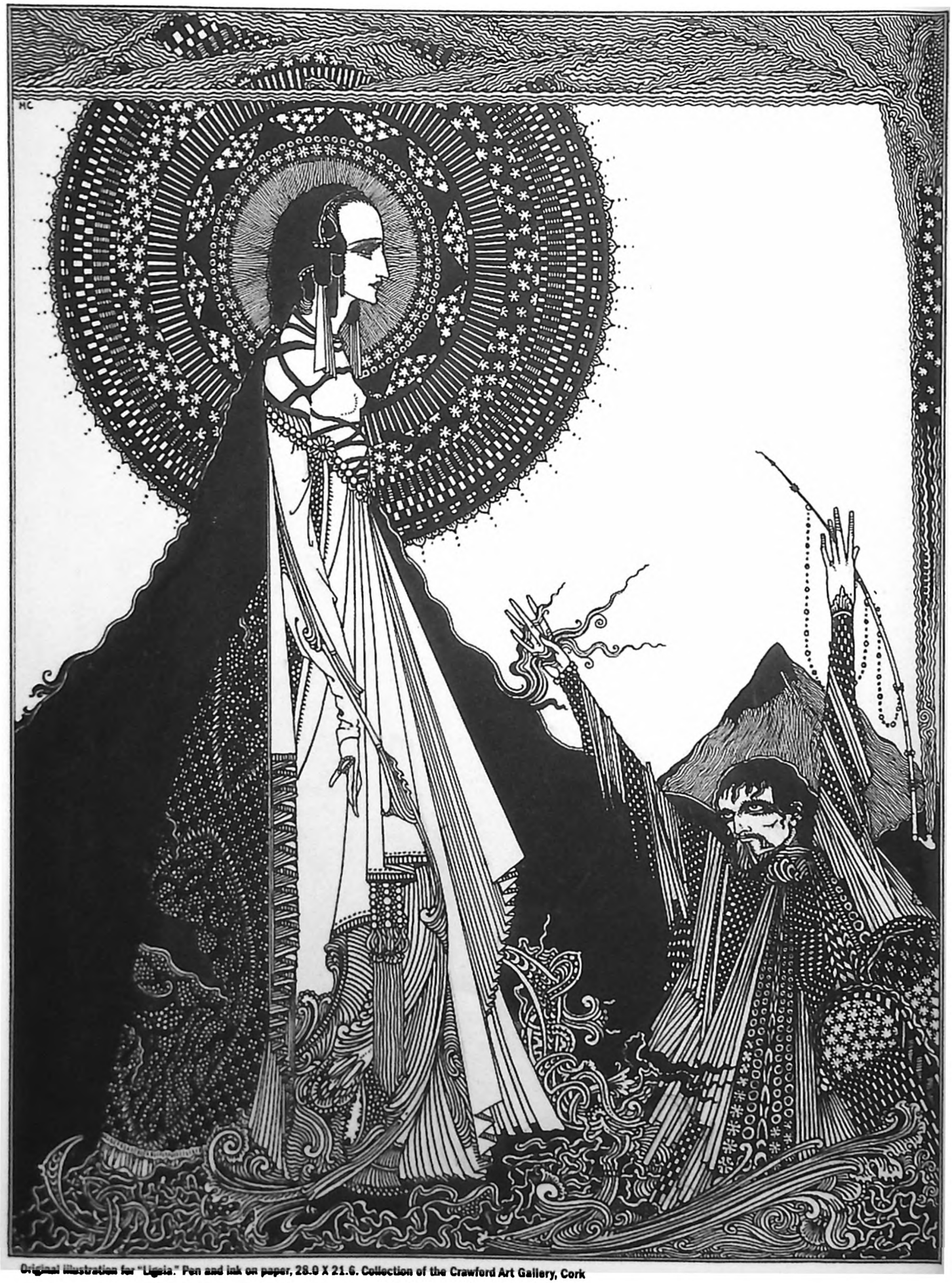
He was a lifelong smoker and in the spring of 1981 his doctor found a tumor in his throat. They operated quickly, but while recuperating in the hospital he had a stroke. Joseph Szokoli died at the age of sixty-eight on June 16, 1981.

His last boat was named Pukka after a magical creature from Hungarian fables. According to legend the Pukka was a fiery spirit of untamed wilderness. All human efforts to capture it were dumbfounded by its bewildering power to assume any shape, such as a horse, a rabbit, a goat, a goblin, or a dog, but it most commonly appeared as a sleek black horse with long flowing mane and golden eyes.

Fans of Joseph Szokoli have marveled at his long and multitalented career in American popular culture. Like the Pukka of Hungarian fables, he used impressive shape-shifting powers to protect his own creative liberty behind a baffling array of graphic guises. He never lost sight of an inspired vision from his childhood's dead end street of all the clean white boats sailing free from life's earthbound hardships.

—by David Saunders, 2011

This article was written with the cooperation of the artist's family, as well as the families of Harry Donenfeld, Adolphe Barreaux, Norman Saunders, and H. J Ward. Additional research assistance from John DeWalt, Doug Ellis, John Gunnison, George Hagenauer, Piet Schreuders, Yale University Reference Library, the Pratt Institute Archive Library, the NY Public Library, the NY Times Historical Archive, and the U. S. Library of Congress.



Original illustration for "Ligeia." Pen and ink on paper, 28.0 X 21.6. Collection of the Crawford Art Gallery, Cork

Self-portrait of Harry Clarke

The Macabre Visions of Harry Clarke

By John Osier

Many illustrators have tried to capture the terror in Edgar Allan Poe's tales. None have succeeded like Irishman Harry Clarke. Separated by almost half a century, the two men's temperaments matched; both had an other worldly vision, both searched for ideal beauty, and both had a strong predilection for the strange, the macabre.

Henry Patrick Clarke was born on St. Patrick's Day 1889 in Dublin to Joshua and Brigid Clarke. Joshua owned a stained glass firm in the city. At an early age, Harry showed a strong interest in art filling the margins of his school books with doodles and caricatures. In Belvedere College, a Jesuit run secondary school, his drawing skill was admired by teachers and fellow pupils alike.

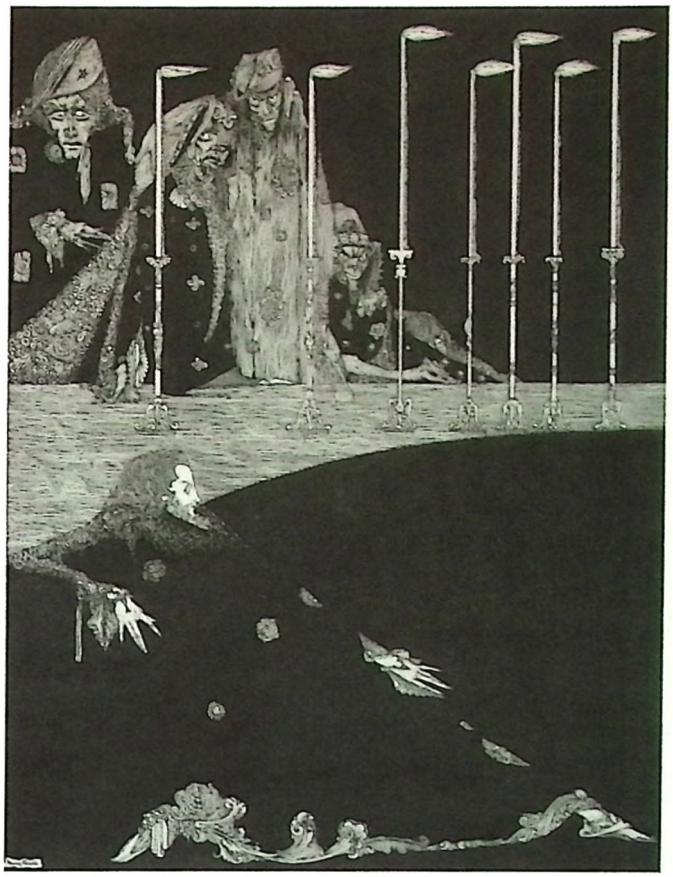
When Harry was fourteen, his mother died from tuberculosis, as Poe's mother had died of the same disease when he was young. After Brigid's death, Clarke dropped out of Belvedere to work in his father's studio, briefly attending South Kensington School of Design in London before returning home to enroll in night classes at the Metropolitan School of Art where he studied life drawing under Sir William Orpen. According to his biographer Nicola Gordon Bowe, Harry was shy and diffident but "completely confident" of his artistic ability and soon his abilities were being recognized. From 1911 to 1913 he won three gold medals for stained glass entries at the South Kensington National Competition. He soon would become one of the century's finest stained glass artists.

Yet he also yearned to illustrate books; he was a voracious reader and the author he probably felt the deepest empathy with was Poe. By 1913 he was making drawings of Poe's tales in pen-and-ink. The same year he was commissioned by Laurence Waldron, a wealthy Dubliner and Harry's first patron, to do six pen-and-ink drawings from Pope's poem, "The Rape of the Lock." Harry had fallen under the influence of Aubrey Beardsley, the foremost artist of the English Decadent movement, and the drawings were very much in the Beardsley manner. It would take Clarke several more years to fully develop his own style.

Another author Clarke admired was Coleridge; he did eight black and white drawing for the poet's "Rime of the Ancient Mariner." They were fine renderings and a Dublin firm decided to publish them with the poem, but during the Easter Rebellion of 1916 the publisher's offices were burned along with most of Clarke's drawings and the intended book never materialized. Clarke was deeply disappointed, but with a portfolio of his drawings he traveled to London to try to interest publishers there in letting him illustrate. After numerous rejections, the breakthrough came when publisher George Harrap commissioned Harry to illustrate a new volume of Hans Andersen's fairy tales. The first third of the 20th century was the golden age of expensive "gift books," lavishly illustrated by artists such as Arthur Rackham, Kay Nielsen, and Edmund Dulac. Harrap was taking a gamble

Interior illustration for "The Fall of the House of Usher," 1919

Original illustration for "The Fall of the House of Usher," 1923. Pencil and watercolour on paper, 40.0 x 29.8 cm. Collection of the Crawford Art Gallery, Cork



Original illustration for "The Pit and the Pendulum," 1919. Pen and ink on paper, 27.3 x 20.3. Collection of the Crawford Art Gallery, Cork

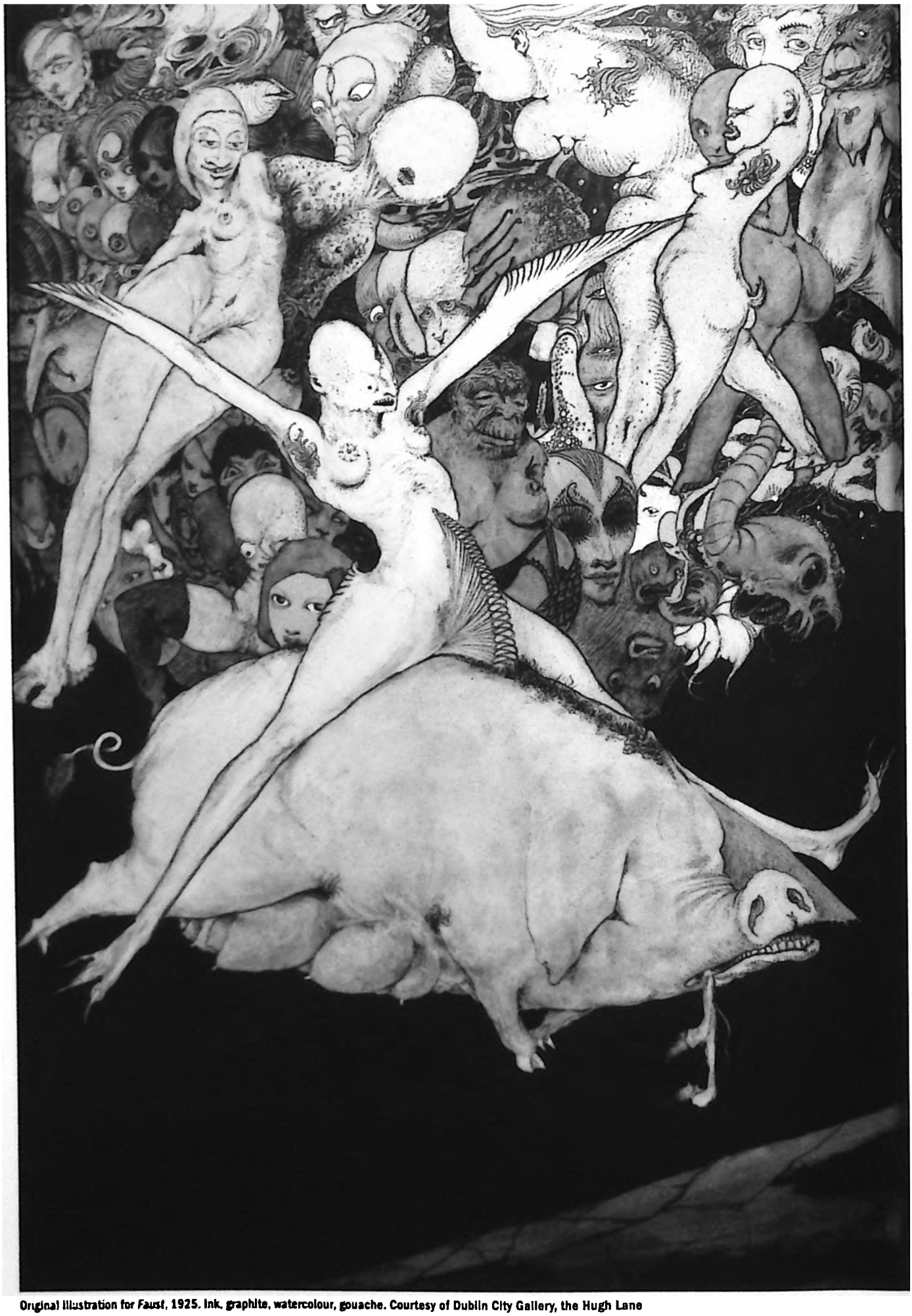
letting this young newcomer illustrate Andersen, but Clarke's portfolio impressed him.

The Andersen volume came out in 1916, published in the U. S. by Brentano's as well as in England by Harrap. The black and white drawings still show a Beardsley influence, but Clarke's jewel-like color plates with their intricate detail are dazzling, thanks in part to his experience with stained glass.

Having viewed some of Harry's Poe drawings, Harrap decided next to give Clarke a commission for the cherished Poe project, *Tales of Mystery and Imagination*. The book was to contain only pen-and-ink drawings. Tall, gaunt, with dark eyes and hair, Harry could have posed as one of Poe's haunted protagonists. The drawings he submitted for the book combine beauty and the macabre, sometimes verging on the morbid, such as one showing a putrefying corpse. Clarke unleashed his full imagination in depictions of worm-like beaked creatures and attenuated humans who seem like preserved specimens in some dark laboratory. When the book was released in 1919, most of the reviews were effusive in praise, one reviewer calling Clarke the "relentless illustrator 'par excellence' of E.A. Poe." Another reviewer, Dublin novelist and painter George Russell, stated "Clarke is certainly the artist to illustrate nightmares" and that the drawings had "the poisonous beauty of fungi." A third reviewer, Thomas Bodkin, wrote "it is safe to predict no one will ever produce more striking effects in black and white" than Harry Clarke. The book was an immediate success, and George Harrap felt it was Clarke's greatest achievement, so much so that four years later he had Harry do a new edition with eight tipped-in color plates.

First, however, Harry illustrated two other books for Harrap, a poetry anthology *The Year at the Spring* in 1920 and *Fairy Tales of Perrault* in 1922. Neither approached the commercial success or drew the kind of praise the Poe book had. Released in 1923 with the added color plates, the new edition of Poe's tales was a greater success than the first one Clarke did. The watercolor for "The Fall of the House of Usher" is perhaps the most striking, beautiful but grim, and shows Clarke's familiarity with Japanese painting, notably in the lower half as Madeline Usher breaks free of the coffin. His subtle handling of color in all the new plates demonstrates again the mastery he had attained in stained glass. The book was also released in New York under Brentano's imprint. Subsequently it has gone through many editions, some pirated, right up to the present day.

It was clear that as far as book illustration was concerned Clarke's true métier was the outré, and Harrap next commissioned him to illustrate a deluxe edition of Goethe's *Faust*. A number of artists had illustrated the drama of the scholar who sells his soul to Satan, the most notable, Eugene Delacroix. Clarke's version would break new ground. It swarms with



Original illustration for *Faust*, 1925. Ink, graphite, watercolour, gouache. Courtesy of Dublin City Gallery, the Hugh Lane

Original illustration for *Faust*, 1925. Ink, graphite, watercolour, gouache. Courtesy of Dublin City Gallery, the Hugh Lane

Original sketch for *Faust*, 1925. Courtesy of The National Library, Dublin

Original illustration for *Marie Rouget*, 1923. Pencil and watercolour on paper, 34.3 x 26.5. Collection of the Crawford Art Gallery, Cork

phantasmagoric images conjured as if from a fever dream. The opening illustration sets the tone: a black and white drawing of Mephistopheles, his neck elongated like a sinister serpent, hovering over Faust and his lover. In other drawings monster spiders with wire-thin tentacles ensnare their human prey, a woman with flippers instead of arms rides a pig through the sky, leading a grotesque throng of sinners to a witches' Sabbath. In line drawings heads are attached to buttocks, rats spring from mouths, a bird-like creature envelopes the heroine's head. The illustrations are filled with the overtly sexual: in one color plate Clarke depicts penises with eyes hanging above a capering naked witch. The hallucinatory imagery along with the sexual elements puzzled some reviewers, offended others, but the book published in a limited edition of a thousand signed copies by the artist for England and another thousand for America has become a collector's item. Reviewing the edition when it first appeared, George Russell wrote "wherever the imagination of Goethe conjures up the macabre...Clarke will add a shudder...." adding that Clarke's "fertility of invention is endless." In a number of the drawings including the final tail piece where a fish-headed creature with gaping maw clutches Faust, Harry drew his own face as if in the title character who risks eternal damnation, he saw himself.

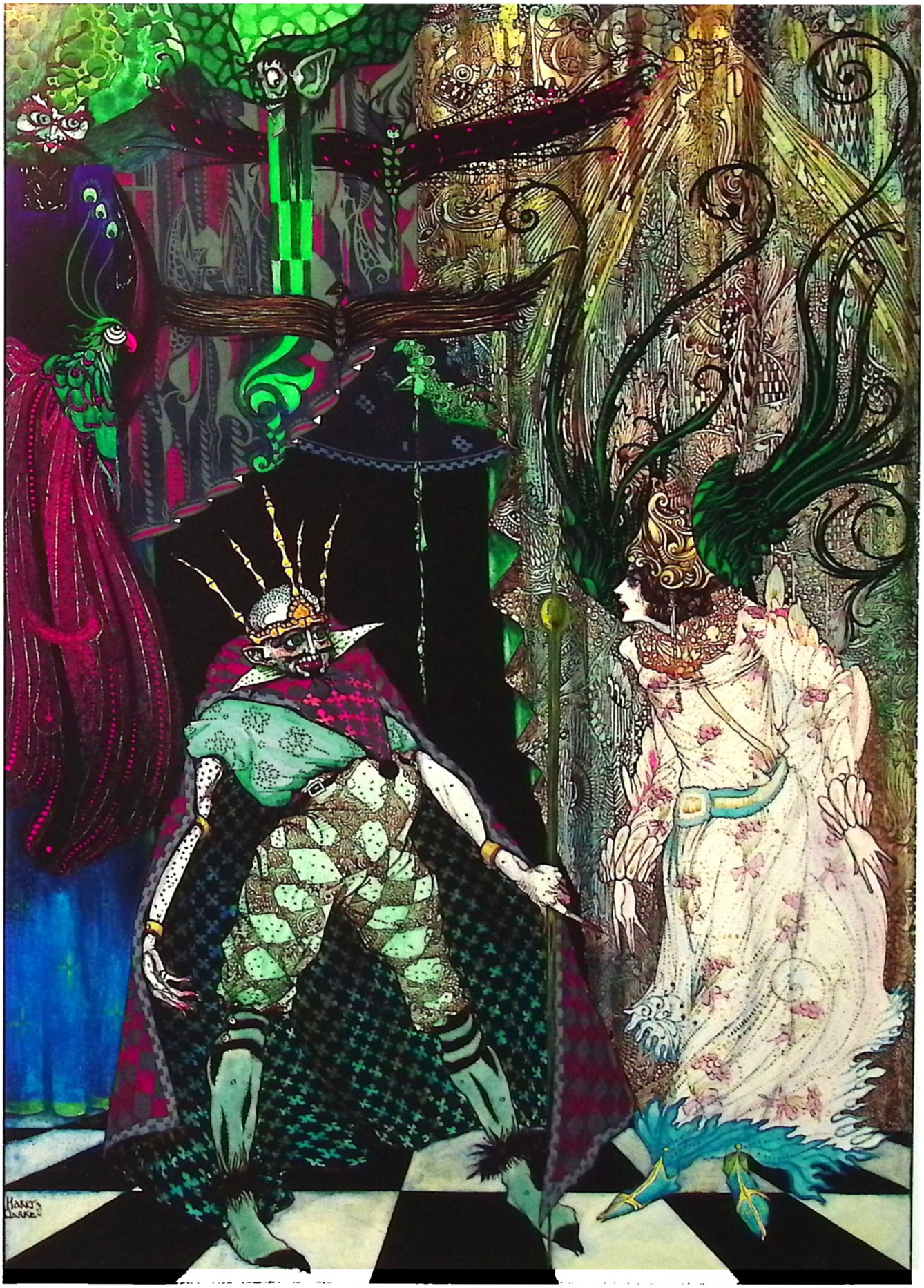
Not long after the book came out, Clarke had a near fatal bicycle accident. For weeks he was unable to work; it took months for him to fully recuperate. Although he drove himself hard in his work, he was often ill with spells of enforced idleness. His father had died in 1921 and in addition to illustration work, Clarke and his older brother Walter had to run the stained glass studio alone. With his glass in high demand, Clarke found himself pressed to keep up with the increasing work load and still have enough time for his family. He had married Margaret Crilley, a portrait painter, when he was 25, and they had three children. The strain of the workload in the studio meant he had little time now for book illustration. He was to do only one more book, *Swinburne's Selected Poems* which came out in 1928. For it he drew ten black and white illustrations and as he was working on them, he knew he was physically failing.

In 1929 he was diagnosed with tuberculosis. Beside the perhaps hereditary disposition to the disease, he had been a chain cigarette smoker for years and had been subjected to harsh acid fumes used in staining glass since boyhood.

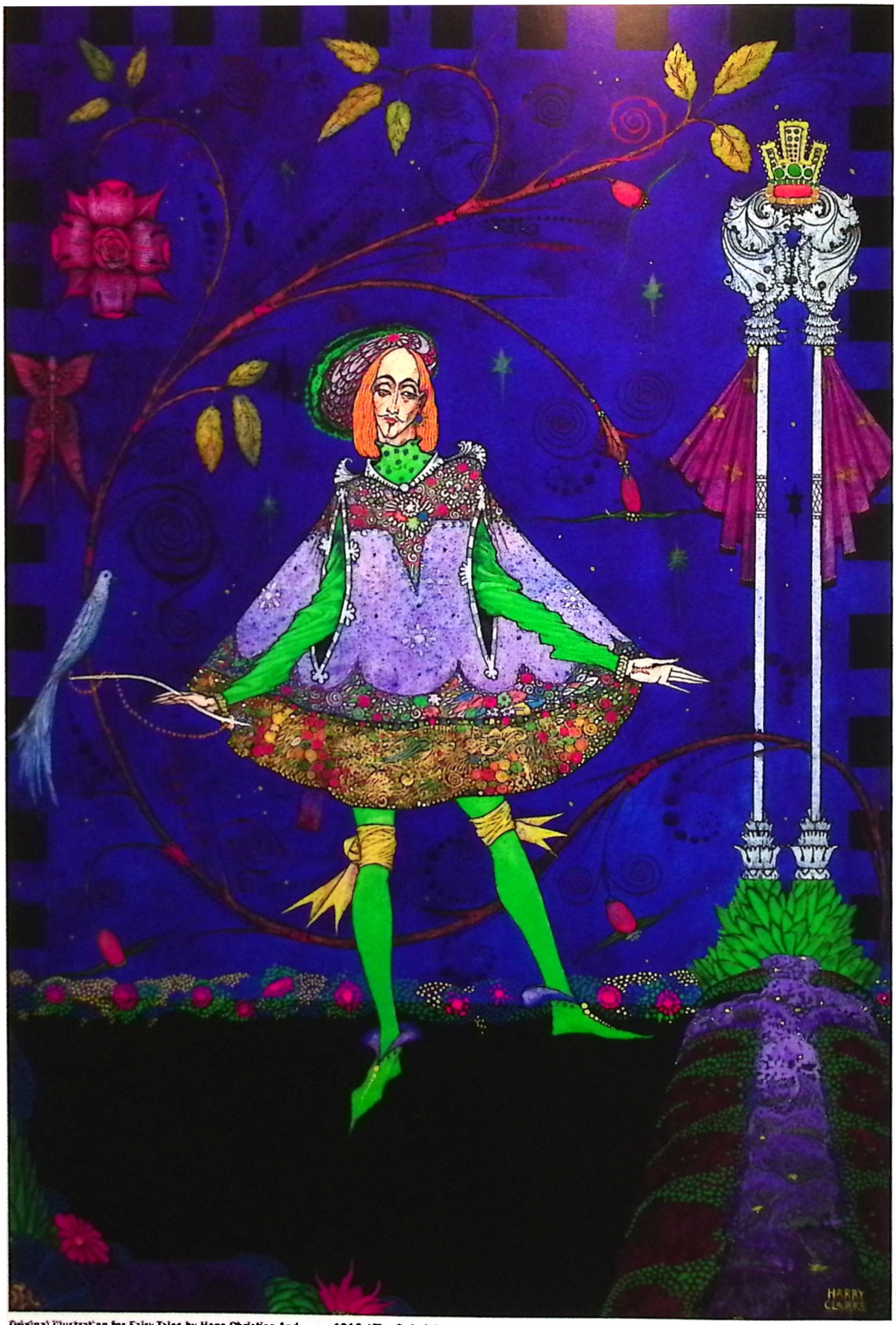
Leaving behind his family and the studio work, he checked himself into a sanitarium in Davos, Switzerland where he stayed for almost a year hoping his lungs would improve. When it became apparent he was getting no better, he returned home. During his absence the studio had fallen into disarray. Walter died suddenly and the entire burden of running the studio and filling back orders overtaxed Harry's strength.

Original illustration for *Faust*, 1925. Ink, graphite, watercolour, gouache and glazes with body-color highlights

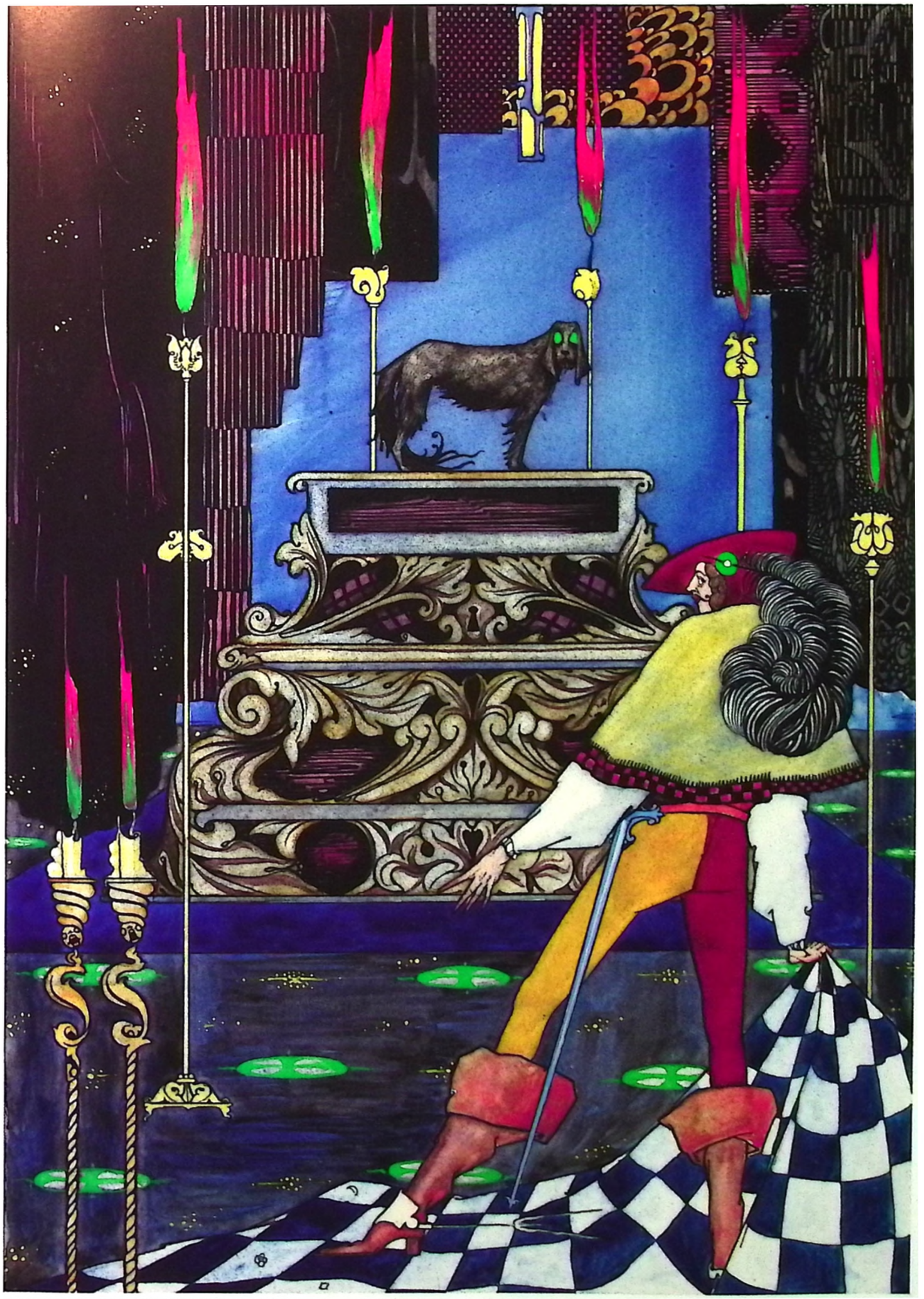
Original illustration for *Fairy Tales by Hans Christian Anderson*, 1916. "The Snow Queen." Ink, graphite, watercolour, gouache and glazes with body-color highlights. 40 x 28.2 cm. Photo © National Gallery of Ireland



Original illustration for *Fairy Tales by Hans Christian Anderson*, 1916. "The Travelling Companion." Ink, graphite, watercolour, gouache and glazes with body-color highlights. 44.7 x 32 cm. Photo © National Gallery of Ireland



Original illustration for *Fairy Tales by Hans Christian Anderson*, 1916. "The Swineherd." Ink, graphite, watercolour, gouache and glazes with body-color highlights. 36 x 24.8 cm. Photo © National Gallery of Ireland



Original illustration for *Fairy Tales by Hans Christian Anderson*, 1916. "The Tinderbox." Ink, graphite, watercolour, gouache and glazes with body-color highlights. 38.5 x 31.6 cm. Photo © National Gallery of Ireland

Original illustration for *Fairy Tales by Hans Christian Anderson*, 1916. "The Garden of Paradise." Ink, graphite, watercolour, gouache and glazes with body-color highlights. 39.2 x 27.6 cm. Photo © National Gallery of Ireland

After a few months he had to reenter the sanitarium in Davos.

In January 1931, homesick and desperate to see Margaret and the children, he checked out of the sanitarium and left for Dublin. He never made it. He died in the Swiss village of Coire at 41 and was buried there. Poe had died at 40.

The final stained glass window Clarke designed and worked on before he died was a three window version of The Last Judgment for St. Patrick's Church, Newport, County Mayo in which he had portrayed himself falling headfirst into Hell. Whether this was sardonic humor or he felt convinced he was damned, one may only speculate. A close friend, Lennox Robinson, consoled himself over Clarke's death with the comment that Harry lived on in his stained glass windows in churches spread over the world. Yet many more know his book illustrations, particularly for Poe's Tales in which writer and artist combined to create a Gothic symbiosis yet to be equaled for beauty and terror.

— by John Osier, 2011

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thanks to Peter Murray, director, Crawford Art Gallery, Cork, for use of images, and Louise Morgan, National Gallery, Dublin. Also the National Library, Dublin. Special thanks to Joanna Shepard and Liz Forster, Dublin City Gallery, The Hugh Lane.

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Harry Clarke: His Graphic Art, Nicola Gordon Bowe, Dolmen Press, 1983.

The Life and Work of Harry Clarke, Nicola Gordon Bowe, Irish Academic Press, 1989.

***The Geneva Window*, a sketch for a stained glass composition. Courtesy of Dublin City Gallery, the Hugh Lane**

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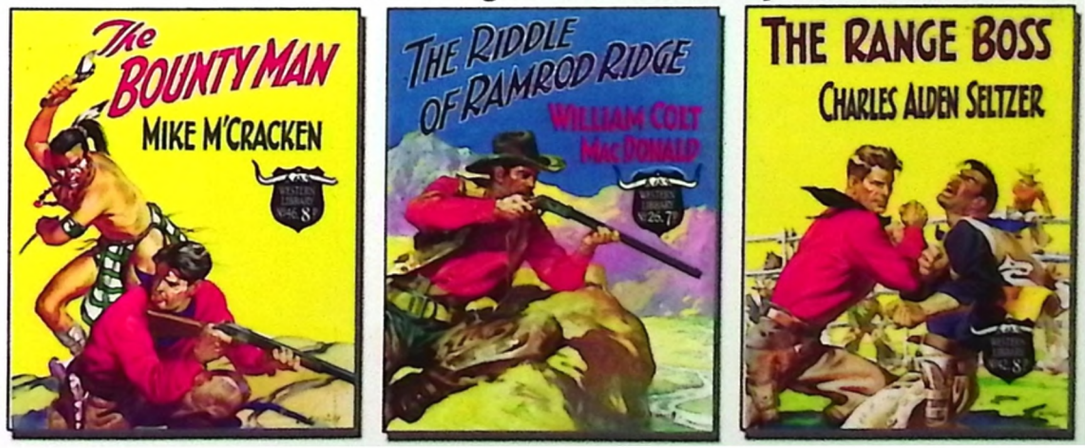

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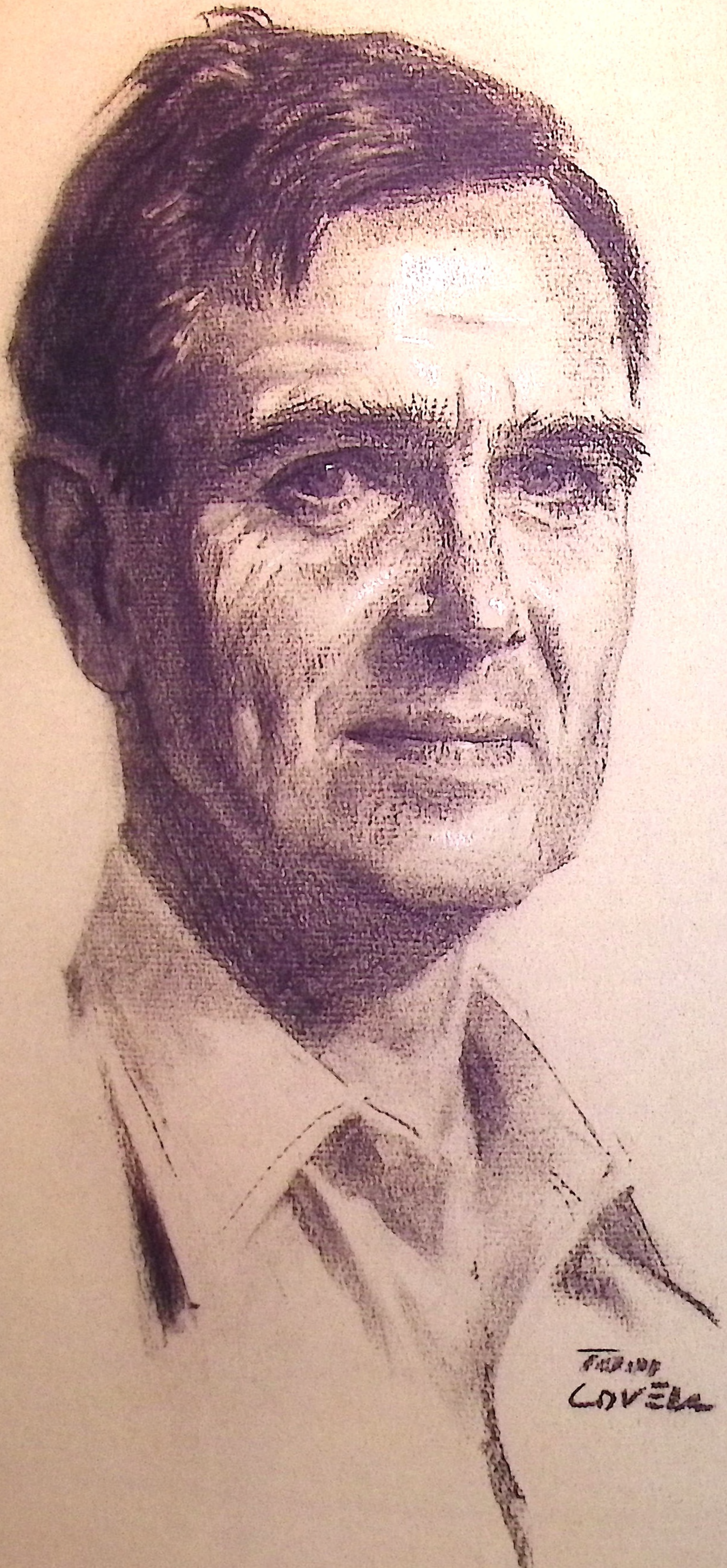

Walt Reed

A LIFE IN ILLUSTRATION

By David Saunders

Walt Reed is the world's foremost authority on the history of American illustration art. Over the last 94 years he has been associated with most historic figures and institutions of 20th century illustration. His venerable life story includes chapters on syndicated newspaper cartoonists, Pratt Institute in Brooklyn, the Phoenix Art Institute in Manhattan, pre-war and post-war New York illustration, the artist community of Westport, Connecticut, the Famous Artists School, the New Britain Museum of American Art, North Light Publications, and Illustration House gallery. Walt Reed has written many books on classic American illustrators, including the definitive reference work *The Illustrator in America*. Although his accomplishments are widely known, very little has been published on the modest man behind the legend. To document his life story in his own words, a series of interviews have been conducted over the past year, from which the following profile has been produced.

Walt Arnold Reed was born on July 21, 1917. His father was Fay Reed and his mother was Edith Terpening. He was the eldest of five children, born in Big Springs, Texas, where his parents had moved from their family roots in Grand Rapids, Michigan. After a few uneventful years in Texas, the Reed family returned to Grand Rapids where Walt's father took over his father-in-law's company, which manufactured special brushes used in furniture factories. His mother, a graduate of Kalamazoo College, was a schoolteacher. She closely supervised her children's education at local public schools. There were no artists in his family history, which is a mixture of British and Dutch ancestries. Walt's schoolteachers were supportive of his artistic talent.

"I had a natural feeling for pictures from the very beginning. I was first beguiled by the Sunday comics, even before I could read. I was a big fan of *Happy Hooligan* and *Krazy Kat*, but I was always puzzled by those rapidly changing backgrounds!"

His father was a rebel, an idealist, and an admirer of Walt Whitman, after whom his son was named. He had strong ideas about raising children to be self-sufficient. He bought a small farm outside of Grand Rapids, just so his five children could spend part of every year learning about farming and life outdoors. His father was more interested in raising his children than running his business.

During the Great Depression the Michigan furniture industry suffered hard times, so the market dried up for the special brushes that the family business produced, but Walt's father converted his shop to also make archery equipment, which used many of the same materials, tools, and skills. Archery was a popular activity at the time. All of the Reed children worked in the shop. Walt's father even taught a Boy Scout troop how to make bows and arrows, while Walt earned his own merit badges with such dedication that he eventually became an Eagle Scout.

He attended public high school and enjoyed his art classes. When his work was included in a citywide exhibition, he and his parents realized superior art classes were being taught at the Davis Technical High School, where students were trained to make a living in various trades. Walt was eager to learn how to draw and paint realistically. The art teacher at the school, Frank Wood, had studied at the Chicago Art Institute and he passed that training onto his students at Davis Tech. In 1934 Walt attended art classes at Davis Tech, while continuing his

LEFT: Portrait of Walt Reed by Tom Lovell, 1980

Walt Reed (center) with family, June 1931

regular studies at Central High School. Even at this early stage, Walt pursued dual interests in art and scholarship.

His first big break came when he was still in high school. The *Grand Rapids Herald* had an art staff with two talented artists, Ray Barnes (1885-1973) and Joseph Korff (1884-1955). They had a friendly hometown feature called "Razzing the Rapids" which covered local celebrities and their backgrounds. Once a year the paper ran a special Sunday supplement that featured cartoon parodies of all the regular advertisers.

"I had been going to their art department to learn about the technical process of photoengraving, and I would take my portfolio along for a critique. One year they gave me a chance to help out with their big project, 'Razzing the Rapids.' They gave me some roughs and asked me to do the finished jobs in ink. There were least sixty of them, and I did about fifteen. It was good training. I learned a lot from those two generous artists."

Walt graduated from high school in June 1936, but continued to take art classes at Davis Tech for another year while he attended Grand Rapids Junior College. During the Great Depression it was difficult for many families to afford advanced education, but Walt paid for his own tuition by providing the school athletic department with archery equipment from his family business. His junior college was a two-year program. During his final year he took drawing classes at the Grand Rapids Art Museum. Walt also credits another local artist for providing much helpful guidance.

"Kreigh Collins (1908-1974) was a very good illustrator who then had a syndicated strip that was called *Kevin the Bold*. It was about an historic Irish hero that he drew in the style of Hal Foster. The syndicate eventually asked him to do another strip with a heroine instead. So he created *Mitzi McCoy*, which was based on a girl reporter. It was very handsomely drawn with a lively story. During his whole career as a syndicated cartoonist he lived in the small town of Ada, which was just outside of Grand Rapids. He had studied in Cincinnati, which was one of the nearest places for advanced art training. The other was the Art Institute of Chicago. Most students who finished high school in Grand Rapids went on to Michigan State or the U. of M., but I had read the book *How to Illustrate for Money* by Syd Hydeman, so when I finished junior college in June 1938, my dream was to go to New York City to attend a professional art school to become an illustrator. One of my buddies from high school had earlier moved to New York City. His family was willing to put me up in New York for a short while, until I got established. So I sold my stamp collection for five bucks. That was most of my capital. Some other high school friends were driving an old car to New York, so I chipped in for gas and went along. There were five of us. We drove that car nonstop. I now marvel at how naive we were. Instead of taking turns driving, this one kid drove that car through the night the whole way. Roads were *terrible* back in those days! Many were still unpaved! I don't know how we did it, but we arrived at dawn in New York and parked the car on a side street near Central Park, where I kind of reconnoitered and decided what was next. I had never been to New York before and I knew nothing about it, but I had an address, so I put a nickel in the subway and rode out to Brooklyn. Anyway, that was the last I saw of my erstwhile buddies. My friend's family kindly put me up. I really didn't have a plan other than calling on a couple of art schools to see if I could work out some kind of scholarship, because I didn't have any money at all. I took my portfolio over to Pratt and I said I would like to apply for a night school scholarship. I still remember they had a very nice receptionist. I think my portfolio convinced them that I was a good prospect, because I got a pretty good scholarship."

He got a room and meals at the Brooklyn Central YMCA on Hanson Place near Atlantic Avenue by working in the kitchen and in the Y's athletic program, where he taught a shop class and supervised swimming, basketball, and other sports activities. For income he earned 30 cents an hour cleaning neighbor's apartments. He walked about a mile from the Y to Pratt for classes at night.

The school required students to declare whether they wanted to be an illustrator, graphic artist, letterer, or cartoonist. Walt definitely wanted to be an illustrator. At that time there were several important illustrators teaching at Pratt, including H. Winfield Scott (1897-1977), Max Hermann (1890-1969), Rudolph Belarski (1904-1987), and Frederick Blakeslee (1898-1973). These last two were both popular teachers, but their busy careers soon made it impossible for them to continue teaching. Night classes had a more limited roster of teachers. He sat in on a few drawing sessions with John Fleming Gould (1906-1996), who taught dry brush technique for the pulps, but his most influential art teacher at Pratt was Nicholas Riley (1900-1944), who studied in Paris and had just started illustrating for *The Saturday Evening Post*.

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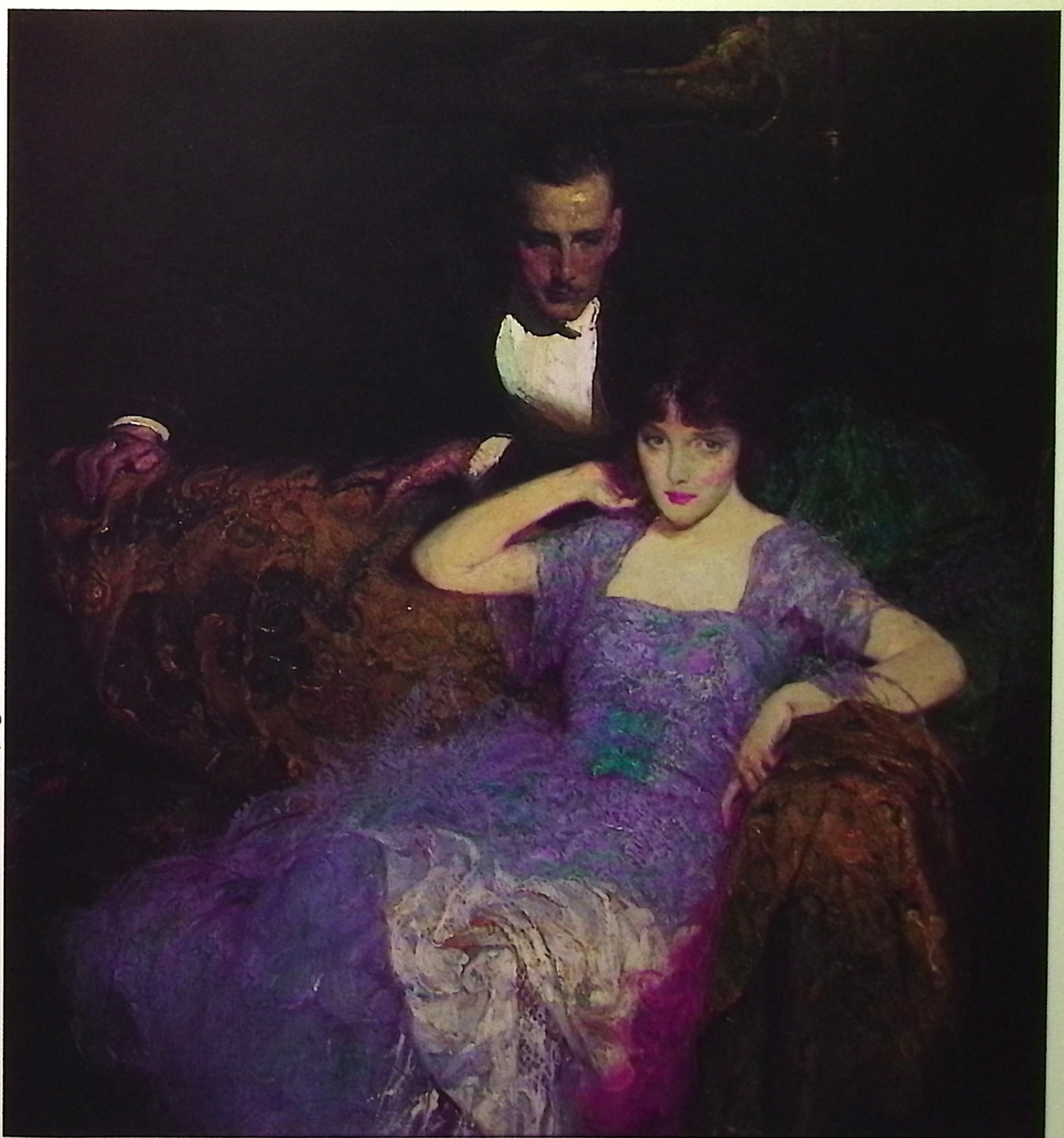


Dean Cornwell (1892-1960) oil on canvas, signed and dated 1920 lower left.

Advertisement, Woodbury Soap, "The clear, smooth, flawless complexion you long for —"

Interior illustration for *Our Navy*, November 15, 1941

Interior illustration for *Our Navy*, November 15, 1941

Interior illustration for *Our Navy*, November 15, 1941

"Nicholas Riley helped me to learn a lot about color. He also encouraged me to learn more about Howard Pyle. He told me about a book on Pyle that was in the school library. *Howard Pyle—A Chronicle* by Charles Abbott. I hadn't really focused on Pyle before, but once I read that book I *really* responded to it. In my spare time I would go to second-hand bookstores and buy old magazines that included his illustrations for five or ten cents a copy. They also had bound semi-annual volumes of *Harper's Monthly, The Century*, and *Scribner's* going back to the 1880s. These were purchasable for the magnificent sum of 25 cents! Just within my budget! That was where I discovered a lot of the great early illustrators, like Charles Dana Gibson (1867-1944), Edwin Austin Abbey (1852-1911), and Arthur Ignatius Keller (1866-1924). I started to tear up these magazines and make a loose-leaf scrapbook with one or two examples of each artist I really admired. If I could find any blurb about their career or anything else, I would include that as well. I kept them in alphabetical order. That book about Pyle really lit a fire under me!"

Most young artists collect samples of older artists to use as reference material, but unlike other fans, Walt started his scrapbook of clippings to better understand the whole field of illustration. His collection eventually grew into a massive reference source on the history of American illustration.

"That scrapbook also stood me in good stead, because many of the artists in my folio were contemporary illustrators that lived in New York City, so many of them were available for me to visit and interview. I would bring this folio book along. They were interested to flip through it to see who was included. They all had comments to make! It gave me a good *entrez* to talk with them about their own work. I had no idea at the time of writing the history of illustration. I was just a young illustrator and I wanted to talk with them about

Interior illustration for Holt Schoolbooks, 1942

Interior illustration for Holt Schoolbooks, 1942

their career and how they worked. Generally the illustrators were very generous to spend time talking with a neophyte student. Ultimately I was interested in how to go about getting a job!"

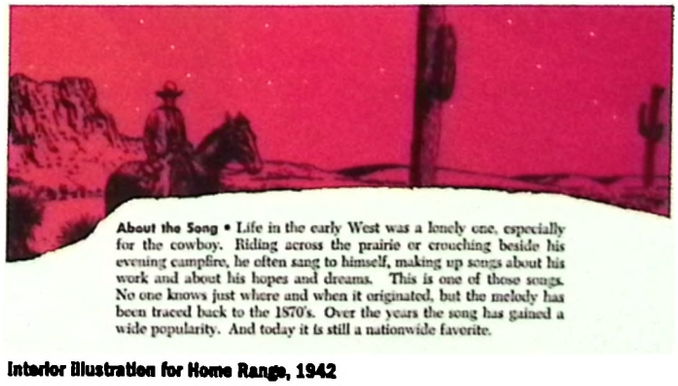
After one year at Pratt, Walt took his portfolio to the Phoenix Art Institute in Manhattan, which had an advanced illustration program. At that time, 1939, the school was uptown at 350 Madison Avenue, near 45th Street, on the top floor of the Borden Building. He got a work scholarship with a job as a class monitor, setting up the room for various classes and interviewing model applicants. The Phoenix school had some rather famous professional illustrators teaching there. Norman Rockwell (1894-1978) had taught there earlier, and Laurence Herndon's (1880-1961) work was on display at the school, but Walt's main teacher was Franklin Booth (1874-1948).

"It was a privilege to study with Franklin Booth and be his class monitor. He would also bring in originals by other illustrators. That was how I first saw the work of F. R. Gruger (1871-1953). The best teacher of all was the school's founder, Lauros Monroe Phoenix (1885-1977). He was a low-key person, but a great teacher! He had a perceptive way of opening your eyes. I learned all about broken color through him, which is a little hard to teach. He would stand there and talk about the problems while you were painting the model. He would never touch your painting!"

By 1940 Walt Reed had done some freelance jobs for book publishers, and was illustrating a few serialized stories for the magazine *Our Navy*. The Second World War had begun and young American men were being drafted for national defense. Walt was only 23 years old, but he had a devout belief in nonviolence. He applied for status as a conscientious objector, which at that time was only recognized on religious grounds. Oddly enough, another illustrator, Matt Kauten (1911-1977), became the first person to ever receive conscientious objector status on philosophical grounds. By the time the Supreme Court settled his case in 1943, Kauten's illustration career had been destroyed by the torrent of public hostility during the trial. Walt Reed had been raised in the Congregational Church, which supported the idea of pacifism, but was not particularly active in promoting the doctrine.

"There was a period when the FBI was investigating me. I had a number of character witnesses for my review by a federal judge. It was a long process. One of the things that the FBI report held against me was that I had worked for *Our Navy* magazine. They questioned why I was willing to work for a military publication, while at the same time claim to be a pacifist. That wasn't very difficult to explain, since I was just illustrating fiction. I wasn't doing anything directly involved with killing anybody."

By July of 1942, after completing his second year of study at the Phoenix school, Walt Reed was drafted as a registered conscientious objector. He remained in service for the duration of the war. Conscientious objectors performed public service, instead of military service, so they wore work clothing instead of uniforms. He was sent to a training camp in New York state. The camp had been established during the Depression for the CCC (Civilian Conservation Corps) to employ citizens in agricultural studies of experimental crops. During the war the old camps were converted for use by the CPS (Civilian Public Service). Walt was sent to an agricultural study program at Big Flats, near Corning, New York, where he underwent six


About the Song • Life in the early West was a lonely one, especially for the cowboy. Riding across the prairie or crouching beside his evening campfire, he often sang to himself, making up songs about his work and about his hopes and dreams. This is one of those songs. No one knows just where and when it originated, but the melody has been traced back to the 1870's. Over the years the song has gained a wide popularity. And today it is still a nationwide favorite.

Interior illustration for Home Range, 1942

ABOVE: Landscape paintings of North Dakota, 1944

months of indoctrination and labor. Then he was sent to another CPS camp to do land reclamation work in an isolated area of North Dakota on the Canadian border. Most of the work involved bulldozers and road graders. Walt worked in the kitchen, and in his free time he painted landscapes of the region. After one year he was transferred to work as an orderly with nursing duties in a mental hospital in Williamsburg, Virginia. He recorded some of these experiences in drawings and watercolors of the doctors and patients and their activities, including shock therapy. The conscientious objectors were quietly discharged in the spring of 1946.

"It was a very complex time. I know a lot of people disapproved very thoroughly of our peaceful beliefs. I don't know if I could have done anything differently. My brother felt the same way I did, but he handled it by enlisting and then requesting assignment to the Military Police, so he didn't have to be in combat. He drew the line there, but I felt I had to do what I did. We received about two dollars a month. After the war we were not entitled to any veteran support services or college attendance on the G.I. Bill. We received no government pension or anything like that. But it was a very positive experience, despite the 12-hour days. I learned a lot and I made lots of good friends."

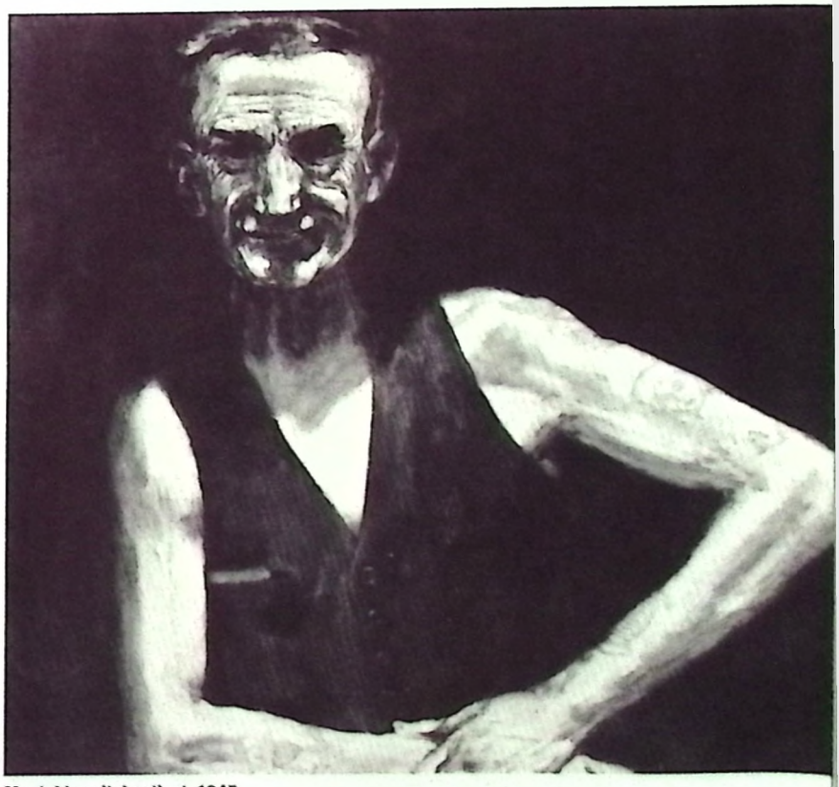
After his discharge Walt returned to New York City to resume his career as a freelance illustrator. He visited publishers with his portfolio and soon found work illustrating school textbooks. Some of his pre-war clients, like *Our Navy* magazine, welcomed him back with new assignments, but he was barely treading water. Along with his professional concerns, Reed was also engaged in the courtship of Mary Garvano, a young Brooklynite, whose family was from Savona in the northern part of Italy near Genoa. She worked as the assistant to the picture editor of *This Week* magazine.

Walt and his wife Mary Garvano

Mental hospital patients, 1945

Door in a mental hospital, 1946

Mental hospital patient, 1945



Mental hospital patient, 1945

Reindeer, 1949

Scene from Lebanon, 1951

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愛
In Korea, these characters are translated as both "constant love" and "CARE."
CARE has come to have the special meaning of constant love to the many thousands of Koreans whose suffering has been relieved through the generous remembrance of American donors.
A national committee has been formed so that this work of love may continue.
Contributions in any amount are urgently needed for CARE packages of food, warm blankets and textiles during the bitter winter months ahead.
CARE FOR KOREAN CHILDREN COMMITTEE
Send your check or money order to
CARE FOR KOREAN CHILDREN COMMITTEE
Enclosed find $_____ for Korean children.
Korea Food Package $10
Knitting Wool Package $10
Cotton Package $10

Advertising illustration for CARE ad. *The New Yorker*, December 12, 1953

They were married in September 1947. Around that same time he was offered a job at the relief agency CARE (Cooperative for American Remittance to Europe), which was established to coordinate the benevolent distribution of a huge supply of U.S. government surplus k-rations to the starving people in war torn Europe. One of Walt's friends from the CPS had become the personnel director of CARE at their headquarters, located at 50 Broad Street in Lower Manhattan.

"My friend organized the financial statements and quarterly reports for CARE. I was hired as a freelance graphic artist to make charts for use in meetings with the top brass. I also worked for CARE as a night watchman! I did whatever I could to make a living. CARE was looking for people to work overseas with their various programs throughout Europe. One day there was an opening for an Assistant to the Mission Chief in Czechoslovakia. It sounded intriguing, so my wife and I decided to spend a year in Prague, and after that return to New York to continue my art career. Well, that was the plan!"

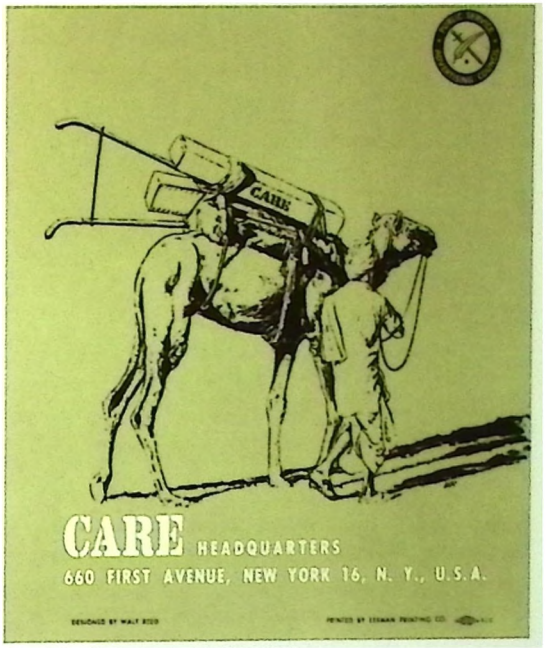
Over the next four years Walt Reed served in a succession of challenging foreign-service assignments for CARE in Czechoslovakia, Finland, Lebanon, Greece, and Macedonia in Yugoslavia. In each case he followed an historic trail of social calamities of the war—floods, droughts, earthquakes and revolutions, which resulted in overcrowded camps of refugees. His work for CARE was perhaps the most obvious example of a lifelong interest in benevolent service.

"I was motivated by what needed to be done. I guess you could call it idealism. During our time abroad, there was a lot of hard work in supervising distribution of relief packages and commodities. There was also an opportunity to really absorb the feel of the countries, since we stayed in each one a relatively long period of time. I was fortunate, as well, to be able to

record our travels through sketches and paintings. However in 1951 I was offered a post in Korea, where CARE served in a war zone under the control of the U.S. Army. That was the one assignment I had to turn down. As an alternative, CARE offered me a job as the Advertising Art Director at their headquarters, so I came back to New York City and resumed my art career."

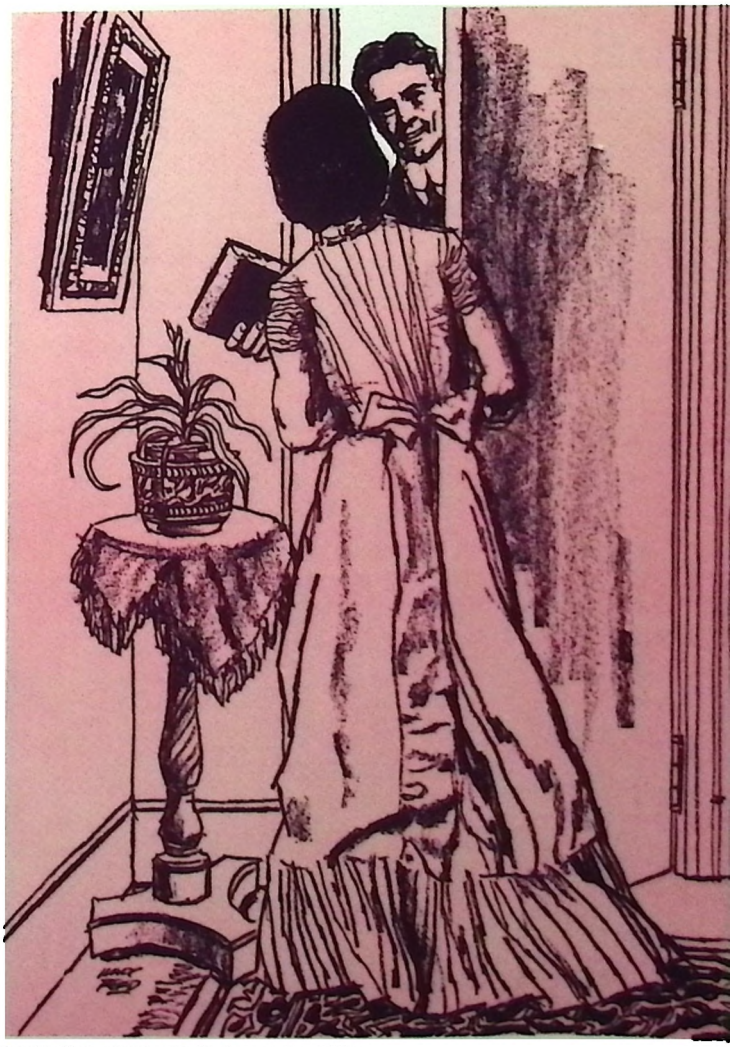
Walt was responsible for designing all advertising, brochures, and all printed material for CARE. This was his first full-time job as a staff artist. He worked as the Art Director for three years, but he still had time for additional freelance work. In 1954 he left CARE to concentrate on his freelance career in the book publishing field. He illustrated school books and juvenile fiction, such as *Science 1, Science 2, The Boy's First Book of Radio & Electronics, Cherokee Strip—The Race For Land, Samuel Morse—Inquisitive Boy,* and *Segregation on Common Carriers.* He also found steady work for magazines such as *Ave Maria, Our Navy*, and *Columbia* magazine. Walt's freelance income was finally enough to survive on and to support his wife and family, which included three children, Stina, Geoffrey, and Roger.

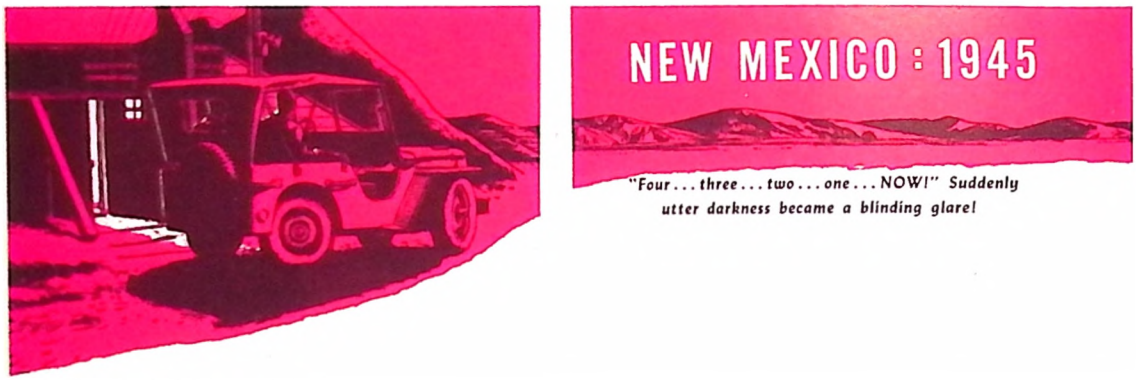
"One of my idols was Harold Von Schmidt (1893-1982). I had been corresponding with him, so I asked his advice about whether it would be a good idea to move to Westport, and he said, 'Well, either Westport or Norwalk, which is not as expensive.' He was one of the major



Advertising illustration for CARE ad, 1954

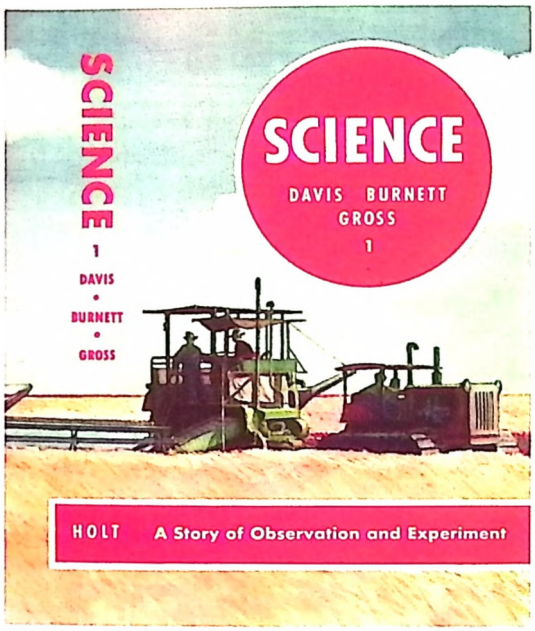
Interior illustration for *Ave Maria* magazine, November 30, 1957


Interior illustration for *Ave Maria* magazine, 1958



Interior illustration for *Science* 2, 1959

ABOVE: Four interior illustrations for *Science* 1, 1958



Cover illustration for *Science 1*, 1958

Interior illustration for *Ave Maria* magazine, August 4, 1957

Heartbreak, 1959

Albert Dorne

Al Parker

Jon Whitcomb

Norman Rockwell

Stevan Dohanos

Robert Fawcett

Harold von Schmidt

Peter Helck

Ben Stahl

John Atherton

Fred Ludekens

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FREE Please send book about your home study art course.

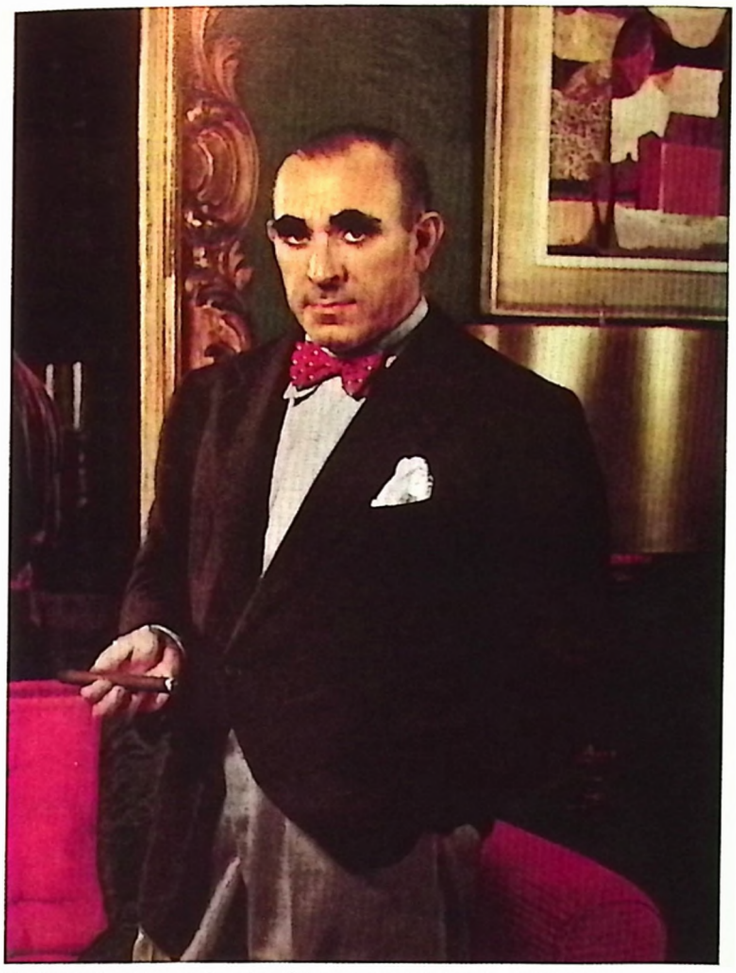
Mr. Mrs.
Miss .....

Street .....

City, Zone, State .....

Phone No. ..... Age .....

Famous Artists School advertisement, 1960s



Illustrator Albert Dorne, founder of the Famous Artists School, 1960

They DREW their way from "Rags to Riches"

Now they're helping others do the same

By REX TAYLOR

Famous Artists School ad in *American Artist* magazine, June 1963

artists in Westport. He had moved there in 1924. Everyone knew Von. He was one of the leaders in the town government and he coached the high school football team. He was quite an institution. In fact when I took a train up to Westport to meet him for the first time, I got into a taxi and I gave the driver the address and the driver said, 'Oh that's Von's house! Everybody in town knows Von! You don't have to tell me how to get there!' Von was very welcoming when I visited a few times to poke around looking for a house."

In 1954 the Reeds bought a former stable and barn on the edge of town. In 1957, after a few years of freelancing and commuting to New York City, he was hired as an art instructor at the Famous Artists School, which had been founded in Westport by Albert Dorne (1904-1965) in the late 1940s.

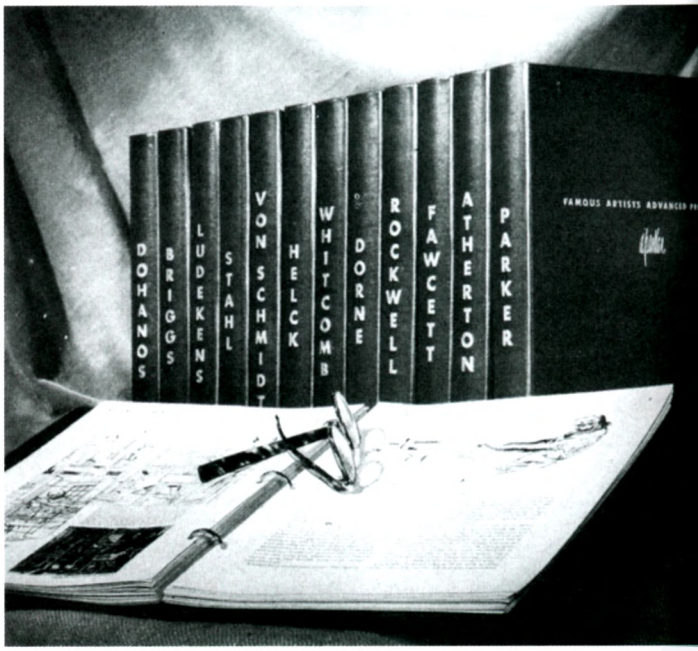
"It would be difficult to describe Al Dorne's contribution to the Famous Artists School, because he was really the heart of the whole thing. He was completely dedicated to it. It was his invention. He planned the school when he was still President of the New York Society of Illustrators. He conceived of a correspondence course sponsored by the Society of Illustrators to help support its overhead. He was advised that he couldn't do it, because of the Society's non-profit status. So he got together this assemblage of famous artists and created an independent school. The timing of that was great."

Albert Dorne was one of the most successful New York illustrators. He got the biggest fees and the most work. He was a strong, stocky, and pugnacious man. Although many artists strove for the glory of painting magazine covers, Al Dorne quickly realized there was a more money and power in advertising. He was a man of significant business savvy. His art studio had a receptionist in the outer office and a showroom with a conference table. He calculated the fee for his work to equal the cost for the magazine ad space, which was incredibly expensive. Very few illustrators could get away with such a demand.

"A typical ad agency job would start with a staff artist making a comprehensive design. Then Dorne would be called in and shown the 'comp' to get the general idea of what was wanted. Then he would go back to his studio and do a new version of the comp. After the advertiser had approved his version Dorne would do the finished rendering, usually in colored inks, which dried quickly and reproduced well. He was famous for his speed. He might be given a full-page ad depicting a Frigidaire with an open door and all of its features and succulent food rendered to the nines, and he would do that job overnight. He might stay up all night to do it, but he was known for being extremely dependable, fast, and his work was impeccable. He got jobs from all of the big ad agencies."

By 1957 the Famous Artists School was enrolling students at an unprecedented rate. This success was the product of Al Dorne's promotional genius. He masterminded an ad campaign that featured Norman Rockwell and the rest of the fa-

Self-portrait of Robert Fawcett addressing art instructors at the Famous Artists School, 1964



Famous Artists School Advanced Course binders

mous founding artists. The school also had a staff of salespeople that went around the country to show textbooks and talk about the advantages of the program.

The correspondence school's original modus operandi was to offer textbook lessons by each of the 12 most famous artists, who would personally critique the submitted work of each student. A problem quickly arose, because everybody wanted Rockwell. He couldn't possibly deal with that workload, so the school hired surrogate teachers for Rockwell to supervise. That lopsided arrangement didn't last long. Dorne realized he had to change the approach, so instead of doing 12 lessons with the artist of your choice, the students received one lesson assignment from each of the 12 artists. After that the school tried a different system of sending each student a whole library of instructional books with mixed comments by all 12 artists. Originally the lesson books were designed for semi-professionals with the assumption that their students had already received some basic art training, but they finally realized they had to completely redesign the books to progress from rudimentary drawing to advance painting techniques, which would follow the standard progress of academic art training. Dorne revamped the whole curriculum and amalgamated subject material from all 12 artists to reorganize the courses into a series of progressively difficult lessons. The Famous Artists School was intentionally designed as an improvement over other rival correspondence schools, like the International Correspondence Shools in Scranton, or the Federal Schools in Minneapolis. By 1955 Dorne had perfected a system for students to start from scratch and go right through 36 lessons to become a professional artist. The original famous 12 artists became advisory personnel, so they were no longer needed for personal critiques, but Dorne had to assemble a staff of over 100 art instructors and several hundred service employees to implement the new course plan. The company became one of the biggest employers in Westport. There was a wide range of artists. Some were young talents just out of art school, who handled the beginning classes. The more competent artists taught the more advanced lessons. Many were retired big name illustrators. Although Westport had a rich community of talented professional artists, many of the instructors were imported from New York City. Several of these new artists eventually resettled in Westport.

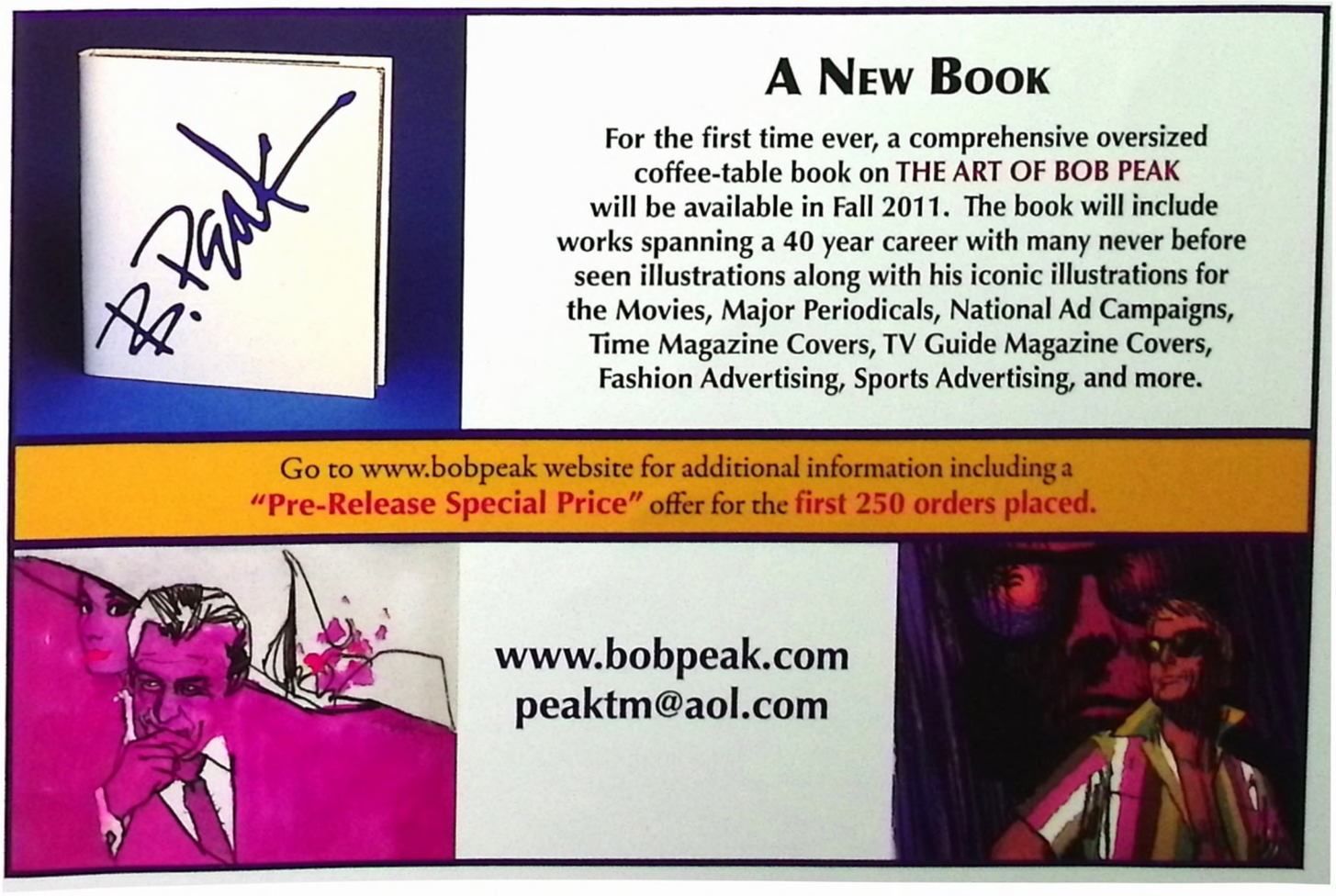
"When students signed up for the Famous Artists School program they received four thick volumes that each contained eight lessons. Each lesson had instructions from the original 12 famous artists, but the actual artists were no longer personally corresponding directly with students. The *Career Course* was based on the original 12 famous artists, who included Al Parker (1906-1985), Albert Dorne, Stevan Dohanos (1907-1994), Austin Briggs (1909-1973), Robert Fawcett (1903-1967), Jon Whitcomb (1906-1988), Harold Von Schmidt, Fred Ludekens (1900-1982), John Atherton (1900-1952), Peter Helck (1893-1988), Ben Stahl (1910-1987), and Norman Rockwell. The school later broadened to include a *Painting Course*, which included artists like Ben Shahn (1898-1969) and Dong Kingman (1911-2000), and there was a *Photographer's Division* with Irving Penn (1917-2009), a *Cartoon Division* with Rube Goldberg (1883-1970), Al Capp (1909-1979), and Milton Caniff (1907-1988), and a *Young People's Art Course* for talented high school kids.

"The instruction courses were very effectively designed. Each student had a one-to-one relationship in correspondence with an art instructor for each lesson. You would get a critique of your submission in a letter that described the areas of improvement needed, accompanied by diagrammatic drawings or paintings. Then the student would go on to the next lesson, which involved further teaching and send us back their new work and we would continue to help them develop. The

school had a lot of applicants from other countries, so they got the idea to open branches in other nations. I believe the first new foreign division started in Amsterdam around 1960. That branch provided courses to students all throughout Europe. Then we had an office in Australia and one in Japan. It was great to work at the school with so many interesting artists. Almost all the time I was there I just worked four days a week. We were paid a yearly salary, instead of an hourly salary. Everyone had to do his predetermined workload. I'd say a good portion of the art staff were on the four-day schedule. That was very handy because you had time to pursue your freelance work. By the time I got there the school had really evolved a pretty efficient system of handling lessons. They knew how long it should take to criticize a particular problem or lesson. So you would usually be assigned around eight or nine lessons a day. We would actually spend 45 minutes to complete one correspondence with each student, but it took even longer for the more advanced lessons. During our allotted time the art instructor would analyze the problem, and make drawings to demonstrate where the problems were or to explain something to improve their work. Then we would dictate an explanatory letter to accompany the drawings. The school had developed a system with a numbered list of prepared statements to explain whatever needed to be said. We had several books filled with these paragraphs, so we could just write down the numbers of the paragraphs that said what we wanted to say. This was a big help for the art instructors to avoid getting bogged down in struggling to verbalize their ideas. We also had dictating machines with magnetic tape, but most of the letters were composed by selecting numbers from the list of pre-written paragraphs. I think the students got even more for their money's worth from our system of numbered paragraphs. We all became accustomed to the ideas in the book. Later on, one of my duties was to write paragraphs for some of the newer lessons, so that also helped me to clarify my own ideas about art procedures.

"The famous 12 artists would each come in once or twice a year to have sessions with us as surrogate art instructors. We would prepare for those sessions with a lot of examples of student drawings and criticisms. Then when they would come in, one artist at a time for a session, they would review our responses and suggest how we could have done it better. They would share with us a lot of their own philosophies about how they worked. So that was great to be in those sessions.

"It was an amazing opportunity to have their expert professional advice. On the other hand, some of the comments you wouldn't want to pass on! Because some of the students were hopeless. Not only hopeless, but they just sloughed off a passive attempt at doing their assignments. The school had a talent test that the students had to first pass, and that got rid of a lot of unlikely prospects. On the other hand they were pretty lenient, knowing that one can start out pretty poorly and go on to become successful. So they didn't want to necessarily turn someone down because their samples were not that


A New Book
For the first time ever, a comprehensive oversized coffee-table book on THE ART OF BOB PEAK will be available in Fall 2011. The book will include works spanning a 40 year career with many never before seen illustrations along with his iconic illustrations for the Movies, Major Periodicals, National Ad Campaigns, Time Magazine Covers, TV Guide Magazine Covers, Fashion Advertising, Sports Advertising, and more.
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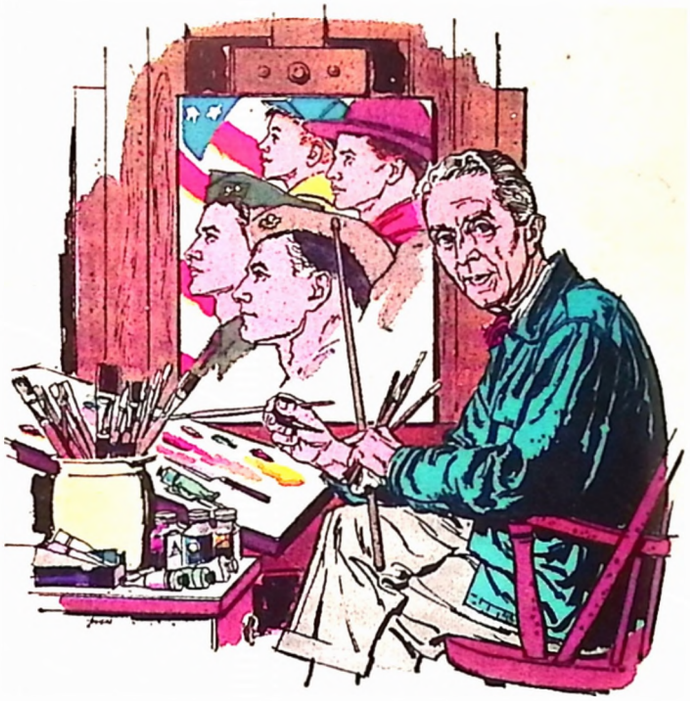
Famous Artists School comic book advertisement (detail), 1965

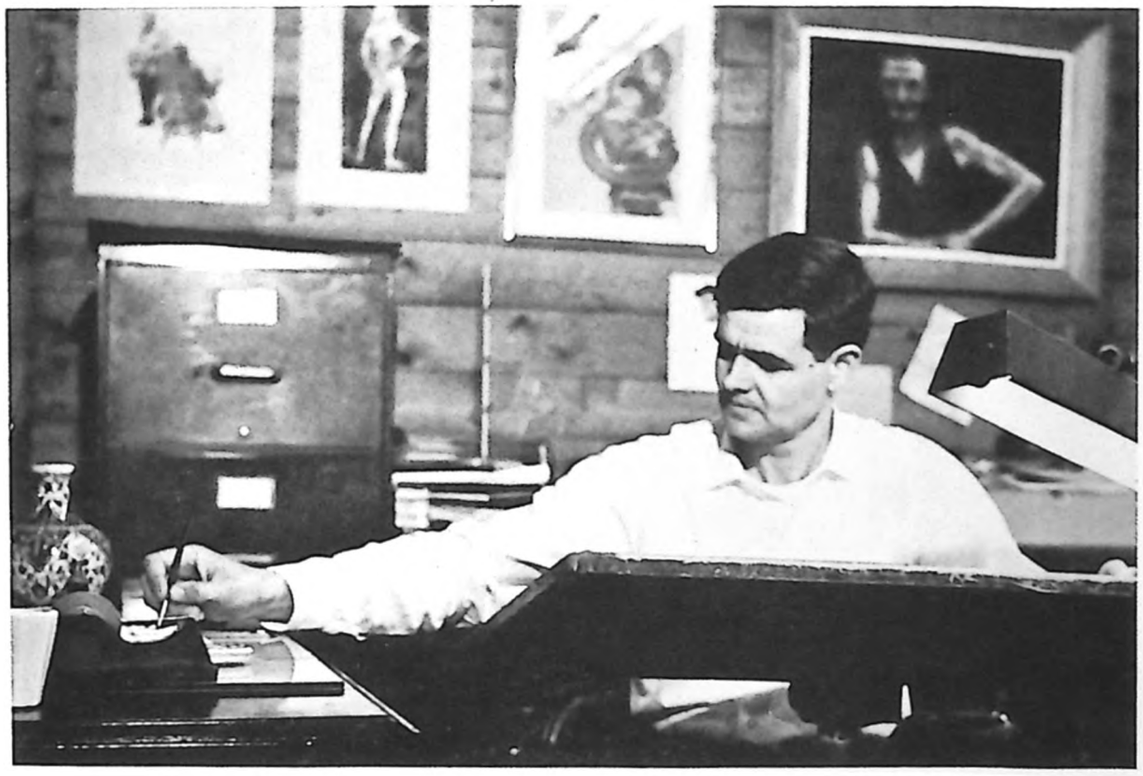


Famous Artists School comic book advertisement (detail), 1965

Sketch of Rudy Belarski by Walt Reed, March 1960

impressive. Dedication and hard work could make a huge difference in a student's progress. Among the community of over 100 art instructors I think there was for the most part a feeling of pride in the work we were doing. The students who were not making much effort or were not very good would usually quit around the third or fourth lesson. For one of the critique sessions we had with Norman Rockwell, we had put up a lot of these pictures done by students. Rockwell would go around the room and critique our critiques. He stopped in front of one and glared at it with a look of outrage. Then he said, 'This student should be horsewhipped!' That kid was lucky it was a correspondence school.

"Out of the 100 or so different art instructors at the school there were some artists who were just as competent and historically important as those first 12 founders, but they were kind of shunted aside. It's kind of curious in a way, because they may have had their years of success and then were kind of forgotten, but they were very knowledgeable. People like Rudy Belarski were recruited, who was very successful as a paperback artist and a pulp cover artist, but when placed alongside Bob Fawcett or Steven Dohanos, he was not given as much respect as he deserved. His name was never mentioned in the advertising for the school, because he wasn't "famous." It was natural for the school to focus on those 12 founders in teaching and promotion. They had been chosen because they were each famous in their own special way. Belarski and others represented a second tier, even though he was a successful and knowledgeable illustrator. Some of the other artists working in the rank and file at the Famous Artists School were Emery Clarke (1911-1990), who did lots of pulps and several covers for *The Saturday Evening Post*. Felix Schmidt (1886-1971), who had been very successful as an advertising commercial illustrator in the '30s and '40s. Lyman Anderson (1907-1993), who did story illustrations for *Woman's Home Companion* and a variety of advertising clients. It's kind of ironic that Rudy Belarski is now more recognized by art collectors than some of the famous 12, who were *kings* at that time. There were a lot of other talented artists working anonymously as art in-



Meet your instructor . . . Walt Reed

"A good story illustration," says Walt Reed, "should be more than a decoration. It should also be more than a literal representation of an incident. Ideally, it ought to make a genuine creative contribution to the story by interpreting its characters and expressing its mood and spirit in striking visual terms."

And that, we may observe, is exactly what is done by the drawings of an artist we know whose name is Walt Reed. Walt's pictures, nowadays seen regularly in a large number of popular religious publications, illuminate the meaning of any story they illustrate and add greatly to the reader's appreciation of it.

Walt was born in Big Spring, Texas, and spent his boyhood in Grand Rapids, Michigan. He majored in art in high school and attended Grand Rapids Junior College, winning a gold medal in a national art contest. Afterwards he came east and attended both Pratt Institute and the New York Phoenix School of Design. Walt earned his way through art school, waiting on tables and doing boys' club work for the YMCA.

In 1948 there came the offer of a post abroad with CARE, the foreign relief agency. The idea of traveling and seeing faraway places held strong appeal, and Walt accepted. His job took him to Czechoslovakia, Finland, the Middle East, Greece, and Yugoslavia. Wherever he went he visited art galleries and museums. Walt made many drawings and paintings, and filled sketchbook after sketchbook with studies of interesting backgrounds and settings. He also collected colorful foreign articles of dress — Lapp clothing, an Arabic costume, Yugoslav peasant shoes, Finnish boots, etc. Many of these articles and backgrounds have since turned up in his story illustrations, where they lend an authentic, convincing touch.

After returning to the United States, Walt was appointed art director in CARE's New York office. Here he had full responsibility for the design and layout of a wide variety of promotional literature and did illustrations for advertisements in national publications. In his off-hours he began to accept free-lance assignments, and eventually turned to free-lancing on a full-time basis. He drew textbook pictures for Henry Holt, Scribner's, Houghton Mifflin, Silver-Burdett, and other publishers, designed book jackets, and illustrated stories in religious magazines. Always interested in helping others with their art problems, he joined the Instruction Faculty of the School in 1957.

The Reeds — Walt and Mary — live in Westport with their three children, Stina, Geoffrey, and Roger. Walt is fond of handball, swimming, and classical music. He often sketches portraits for the benefit of local church fairs, and accepts occasional portrait commissions when the pressure of his free-lance work permits. He is secretary of the Westport Artists, an association of prominent illustrators.

***Meet your Instructor...Walt Reed*, 1960**

Interior illustration for *Ave Maria* magazine, July 30, 1960

structors at the Famous Artists School. That just shows how fleeting fame is. It is a sad fact that many people nowadays do not even recognize some of the names of those 12 famous artists. Their names once had such cultural importance. Those few artists who routinely appeared in *Collier's*, *Cosmopolitan*, *Good Housekeeping*, and *The Saturday Evening Post* were accepted as real celebrities in the American family. Some were as big and famous as the Hollywood stars. Everybody knew them. They had fan clubs, especially in the earlier days, when artists like Charles Dana Gibson (1867-1944) dominated the field. Everybody knew his name and every woman wanted to look like a "Gibson Girl." People like Dean Cornwell and Coles Phillips (1880-1927) were big names. Movie newsreels would include clips about a famous illustrator being the houseguest of Jimmy Cagney and Errol Flynn. James Montgomery Flagg (1877-1960) was a big name! He would get invited to Hollywood movie premieres and occasionally appear in films himself. He was famous for his impromptu drawings of movie stars like John Barrymore. And, of course, everyone knew Norman Rockwell."

The decade that Walt Reed worked at the Famous Artists School was a period of incredible turmoil in the world of American illustration. Today's art historians recognize that 20th century art was largely created under the imposing shadow of advertising, a by-product of the Industrial Revolution. Avant-garde artists have struggled to incorporate the overwhelming graphic power of illustrators. Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec (1864-1901), Pablo Picasso (1881-1973), Kurt Schwitters (1887-1948), and Stuart Davis (1892-1964) each wrestled in their own way with the monumental edifice of the Michelin Man, who was finally toppled in the1960s when the graphic power of illustration art was co-opted by Pop Art. The fashionable success of that new ironic art movement made classic illustrators suddenly look old fashioned. Its remarkable that the careers of great classic illustrators were collapsing at the exact same time that the Famous Artists School was thriving.

"The much larger development at the time of the Famous Artists Schools was the decline of the magazine industry. The School was growing and producing more illustrators, at a time when less illustrators were needed. Television was killing the magazines by attracting an ever-growing portion of the advertising market. With less ad money the magazines began to cost more to produce than they charged for subscriptions, so they lost more money on each subscriber. There was no way the magazines could have countered that trend. They tried. The illustrators were given a lot of latitude to create arresting sub-

THE LINE STRETCHED FOR MILES
***Frank E. Schoonover* (1877 - 1972)**
Oil on canvas; 28" x 38"; 1926
***Oklahoma* by Courtney Ryley Cooper**
Country Gentleman Magazine; June 1926
 # 1446 in the *Frank E. Schoonover Catalogue Raisonné*
Oak Knoll Press, New Castle DE 2009

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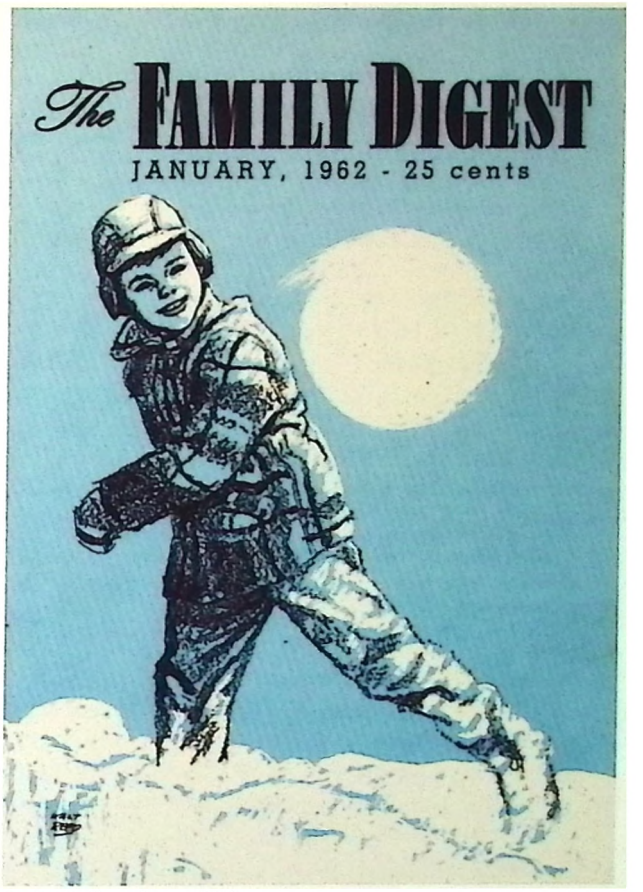
Interior illustration for *Ave Maria* magazine, September 24, 1960

Columbia, September 1960



The Family Digest, January 1962

jects. It was in a way a great period for illustrators, because they were encouraged to be creative and to break away from some of the older stereotypes of illustration. Even the most famous illustrators had to invent a new look if they wanted to survive. That was when the school invited artists like Bernie Fuchs (1932-2009), Bob Peak (1927-1992), Tom Allen (1928-2004), Lorraine Fox (1922-1976) and others who were breaking away from the stereotypical treatments of love stories by artists like Jon Whitcomb. The illustrators in the 1960s were given a lot more latitude and encouraged to try new ideas. One of the leaders among the active illustrators at that stage was Austin Briggs. He was doing some very exciting pictures for *Look* and *McCall's* and other magazines."

Differences in art movements are easier to see in retrospect, so we can make simplified labels, such as Impressionism and Post-Impressionism. But there are currently no such labels to distinguish the new look of illustrators like Bernie Fuchs, who became popular in the 1960s, as opposed to the older look of Jon Whitcomb in the 1950s. For instance, R. G. Harris (1911-2007) and Andrew Loomis (1892-1959) were both excellent painters and completely unique in their styles, and yet their work could be described as "School of Sargent," because they both used traditional academic painting with a strong accent on gestural handling, as seen in the style of Franz Hals (1580-1666) and John Singer Sargent (1856-1925). Other post-war illustrators like Austin Briggs, were doing something rather different from the "School of Sargent," but there is no commonly accepted term for that new movement. Ernest Chiriacka (1913-2010) called this new style "flowery," which perfectly reflects its colorful and ornamental quality. Norman Saunders (1907-1989) called it "the graphic style." Walt Reed has dubbed this new style "experimental." Some of these illustrators were influenced by Modernism. They echoed the unique color schemes of George Braque (1882-1963), or used the loose and spontaneous drawing style of Henri Matisse (1869-1954), or the brutal and exciting anatomical shorthand of Pablo Picasso. These "experimental" illustrators even imitated Pop Art.

"Loomis was traditional and Briggs was trying to break away from that. Instead of calling it 'non-traditional' I would call it 'experimental.' This new style also involved more thinking about the subject of the story and doing an image that was powerful and exciting, while also using a medium that was expressive of the story content. So Austin Briggs might get a story to do and he would end up doing a still life, but he also took a lot of shortcuts in his drawing that would just suggest a head or a figure, rather than spelling it all out. I think some of these artists were pushing in the modern direction as much as they could, but on the other hand they had an audience that was still traditional. They were suddenly given the liberty to cut corners and they would suggest things rather than paint them fully. Coby Whitmore (1913-1988) was a big favorite for

love stories, but his later work became more and more minimal until it was rather simplified. But even with all of these 'experimental' illustrations, the magazines were still fighting a lost battle, because the audience had shifted to television."

Television programming and magazine content had several things in common. The backbone of both industries was advertising, and they both needed good stories and exciting visual designs to drum up a dependable audience. All three elements work together in both formats. By the time Walt Reed had started working at the Famous Artists School it was around 100 years since Winslow Homer (1836-1910) and Frederic Remington started illustrating *Harper's Weekly* in 1857. American illustration art had been perfecting its craft and had reached a pinnacle of sophistication. During those same 100 years, from the mid-19th century to mid-20th century, America had survived the Industrial Revolution and five wars to emerge as the world's greatest military-industrial complex. The increased level of mass production after WWII required a more efficient system of advertising than old-fashioned illustrated magazines. In post-war America all illustrators, even the most famous ones, faced a gradually shrinking market. Walt Reed was in a unique historical position, because just as one cultural trend was ending another one was replacing it. That new trend was a nostalgic interest in the history of illustration art.

"The faculty member who influenced me most strongly was Harold Von Schmidt, and he was kind enough to advise me about some of my professional assignments. As I learned more about his colorful career, it occurred to me that an interesting book should be written about him and his pictures. Before long, the idea of doing a book about Von began to take on a larger dimension, and I wondered if it would be possible to do a book on the whole history of that inspirational period of illustration. I realized that I was in a particularly advantageous position to undertake such a project, since I not only had much of the past material at hand but also had contact with so many of the living illustrators who were either affiliated with the school or who lived in or near the town of Westport."

Besides working as an art instructor and a freelance illustrator, Walt Reed also continued to collect biographical material for his ever-growing folio of classic American illustrators. His art history project was still a hobby but the size of his scrapbook had grown into a unique resource. The only book on the topic at that time was *Forty Illustrators and How They Work* by Ernest W. Watson, but unlike other "how-to" books Walt Reed's collection of alphabetical folders on classical illustrators was more like an encyclopedia in the making.

"A number of things came together for the book around 1962. I got one of my friends who did layouts to make a dummy, and then I showed that to Mr. Dorne. He was very enthusiastic about the idea. It was he who got my book project off the ground. He was very interested in the history of illustration. He was going to start a museum of illustration art at the school. He considered my work as an art historian a part of that vision, so he agreed to write the introduction for my book if I ever completed it. That was an important milestone of validation for the project. So, I started to refine the layout, and I'd periodically show it to him as I was going along. It just kind of grew like Topsy. It wasn't planned out. Although the book had Al Dorne's support, I worked on it only during my free time. Mr. Dorne also suggested Reinhold Publishing. He invited their director up to the Famous Artists School and lavished a fancy lunch and sales pitch. Nobody said no to Al Dorne! So all at once, I had a publisher. I was very fortunate. I admired Mr. Dorne a lot. He was very down to earth. He could be hard-boiled, but was very soft underneath. He would sometimes get very emotional. He knew a lot about the history of American illustration himself. He started out as an assistant to Saul Tepper (1899-1987). So he knew the business from the beginning of that period in the twenties. I had a format in mind to feature one artist that typified the popular style of each decade. He felt that some of the people I had chosen for each decade could be improved upon, so he suggested a few replacements."

At the same time that Walt's book project was heating up, the art school introduced a new quota system to make sure no one was goofing off. They imposed a point system to regulate annual salaries according to workloads and levels of difficulty. When the school went public with its stock, various business arrangements had to be formally described. One of the facts that came out was that Al Dorne was getting an annual salary of over $100,000, while the employees were forced to produce a heavy workload. The art staffers met and decided to organize a union. Perhaps this art school rebellion was indicative of the general social unrest of the People versus the Establishment which was so prevalent in the 1960s.

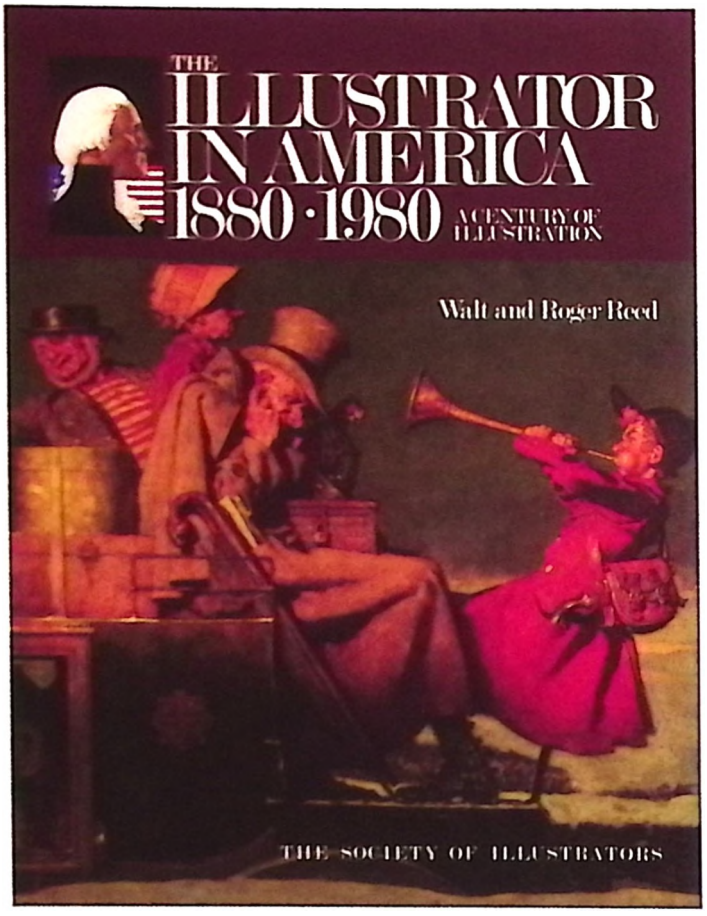
"It was a strange period at the school. We would have meetings to discuss options that would make our lives a little more reasonable. Ultimately, a large majority of the instructors felt under pressure and that management was not paying them well enough. The art instructors were considered half-way between the office workers and management, because there were five or six supporting employees for every art teacher. The whole debate split the instruction staff apart, because a few were anti-union, but most were pro-union. I was an active force in the pro-union contingent. My relationship with Mr. Dorne was adversarial when we had union negotiations, but it was collegial when we talked about my book project. We got along very well together personally. Dorne was a handball player and I was a handball player. As part of our union negotiations we voted for Mr. Dorne as the final arbiter, which touched him. We even had a clause in our contract to allow three of us to extend our lunch period by one-half hour, so we could play handball, and then make up that time at the end of the day, which is unique in the history of union negotiations! Signing the new contract ended the main controversy with installation of a time clock and more overtime pay, which helped to relax the situation.

By 1965, as the illustration market dwindled more and more, the art instructors at the school were all conscious of what was going on in society. They were certainly aware of the fact that we were teaching students a trade for which there were fewer and fewer jobs. I had left the school before the

situation had become too serious, but I could see what was happening. In the '60s I was still working on *The Illustrator in America* and I would interview people who were representing that decade. I remember talking about these developments with Austin Briggs. He and many of the other illustrators were blaming themselves for failing to do enough to revitalize the field. I think a lot of illustrators suffered from that self-blame. They didn't fully realize what was going on. *The Saturday Evening Post* cancelled all the subscribers they could, but they still could not pay their production costs, because there were just too many subscribers! They were losing money on each subscription. They would save money on every subscriber they could cancel. One of the smartest magazines during that crisis was *Cosmopolitan*. They made the most radical step of not accepting any more subscribers. Only newsstand sales. And they're still in business! They were one of the few major magazines that made enough money to keep publishing. So the only magazines that could survive were the specialty magazines, like *Sports Illustrated*. If they had a popular subject with enough following they could keep going, but that meant illustrators who once had an audience of millions were suddenly in a smaller-scale world, and there was no fame outside of that niche market."

Albert Dorne made savvy business decisions that brought the Famous Artists School great prosperity, but in 1966, after he unexpectedly passed away, the school entered a period of financial decline. Dorne's logical successor would have been Fred Ludekens, but he did not want the job. He was available for managerial consultations by telephone, but he preferred to stay on the West Coast. The other guiding faculty members were not qualified to run the business end. Several different candidates were considered, but most were from the world of finance instead of art or education. The person that was ultimately in charge was Dorne's assistant.

"The school had gone public and sold most of their stock, and the stockholders saw all this money in the bank. It was the fashion at that time for companies to acquire other companies to create a larger conglomerate. So the stockholders wanted the school to start buying other companies. They bought Pitman's Publications, which was a British company that produced art books. They bought *Welcome Wagon*, which was a popular service for a while. They would send a gift basket of coupons from local businesses to any new family that moved into a neighborhood. They bought *The Evelyn Wood Reading Course*, which had become famous because she theoretically taught President Kennedy how to speed-read. Other acquisitions followed, but almost all became a drain on the balance sheets. These were not really bad business investments, but they did not contribute to the school in any financial way. The problem came when the school's stock grew higher and higher. As soon as a bear market came along, the school was so overly invested that they were not able to make a payment of stock-



***The Illustrator in America: 1880-1980*, Madison Square Press, 1980**

holders dues, so the stock suddenly plummeted! The school went into bankruptcy, but it remained attractive to some buyers because it had paid so many taxes in advance that it had accumulated a big tax credit for whoever bought it. A company that produced equipment for atomic energy plants was making lots of money, so they were eager to draw on the school's tax credit to pay their own tax bills. They convinced the IRS to let them milk this tax credit if they kept the school going, which they did with a skeleton staff. After the tax credit was all gone, they sold the school to Cortina, which is a language correspondence course. Cortina took on the whole project and became the Cortina/Famous Artists Schools along with the small staff of instructors that had been working there. Rudy Belarski taught at the school until 1972. Fritz Henning was one of the last artists to stay with the school when it was transferred to Cortina. Despite the lack of market for illustrators during those final years, the Famous Artists School still helped many students to become more observant and to figure out how to express themselves in art. The Famous Artists School of Japan is still flourishing!"

After his book *The Illustrator in America* was published by Reinhold in 1966, Walt Reed gradually began to spend less time as an art school instructor. The book was well received, and according to one reviewer in *The New York Times*, "In the pages of Mr. Reed's book the changes in America—and the world—over nearly 70 years are revealed only a little less amply than the changes in the world of illustration." As his reputation as an expert on classic American illustrators grew, he was invited to write about art and artists for magazines, and eventually became Associate Editor of the *Famous Artists Magazine*. In 1964 he was invited to work with North Light Publications of Connecticut.

"A close friend of mine, Bill Fletcher (1931-2002), had started his own business, North Light Publications. He was a former fellow FAS instructor as well as another handball player. He was publishing instructional art books, and he also started a monthly magazine to promote a subscription book-of-the-month club. The magazine had articles about the careers of the artists who were featured in the upcoming books. Howard Munce (b.1915) had started with Bill, but he wanted to go onto different things, so Bill needed more help. In 1972 I left the school and start working for Bill, because he needed help generating book ideas and working with authors and that was something I knew about and enjoyed. The company was also in Westport. Then Fritz Henning (b.1920) followed me from FAS to North Light. My first book had come out and we offered it as one of the selections for our book-of-the-month. North Light went on to feature several of my books on artists, such as Harold Von Schmidt, John Clymer (1907-1989), Joseph Clement Coll (1881-1921), and an instruction book, *The Figure: An Artist's Approach to Drawing*, as well as many other 'how-to' books for artists."

While Walt Reed was promoting a greater awareness of classic American illustrators, Sanford Ballard Dole Low (1905-1964), the director of the New Britain Museum of American Art in Connecticut, had decided to build an important collection of illustration art. He worked closely with Stevan Dohanos in assembling a museum advisory committee, to which Walt Reed was invited to become a member. Dohanos had access to Norman Rockwell, Bob Fawcett, John Falter (1910-1982) and other artists that could help the museum acquire a great collection of original illustration art. This was one of the first museums to have the foresight to launch a significant acquisition program to preserve and promote a greater appreciation of American illustration. The New Britain Museum was renowned for its important collection of American artists, such as Robert Henri (1865-1929), John Sloan (1871-1951), Reginald Marsh (1898-1954), and Childe Hassam (1859-1935), but they did not have paintings by great illustrators, such as Howard Pyle, Norman Rockwell, Dean Cornwell and others. Tragically, soon after this visionary project was launched Sanford Low died. Fortunately his idea inspired others to continue the work in dedication to his memory. At that time there was no legal provision for artists to receive tax credit for donating their own paintings to a public museum, other than the deduction of the trifling cost for the actual art supplies that had been used in its creation. There were many different tasks involved in assembling an important art collection for a museum. Members of the acquisitions committee were asked to contact artists and art collectors that might be willing to donate important paintings.

"You know, Norman Rockwell was a softie. He gave us a couple of major pictures, and so on down the line. Most other

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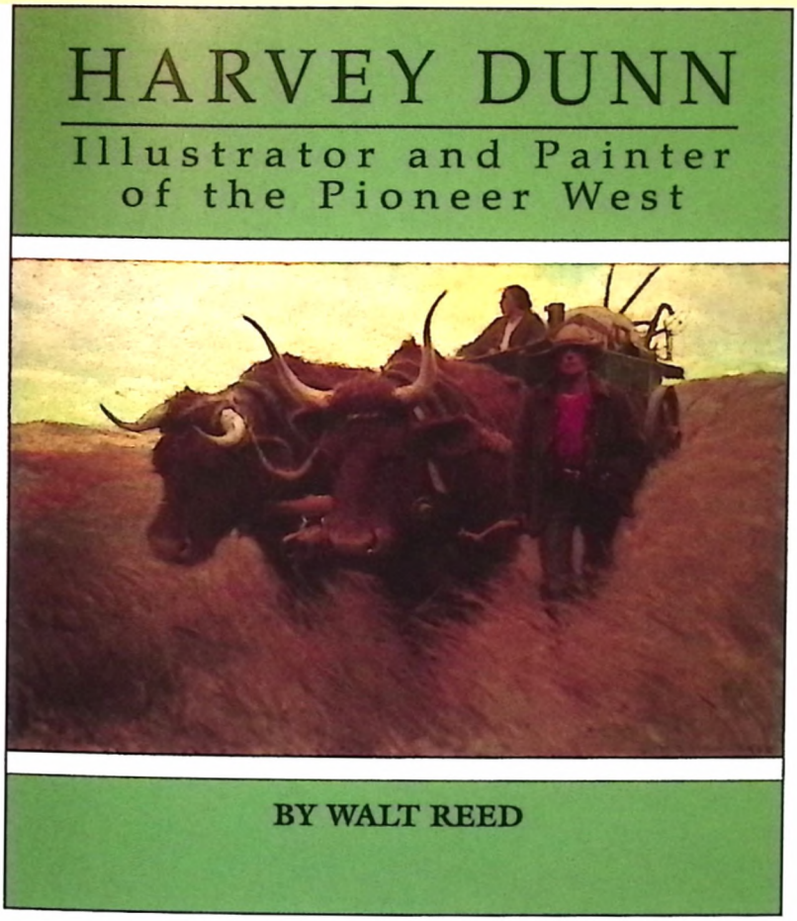

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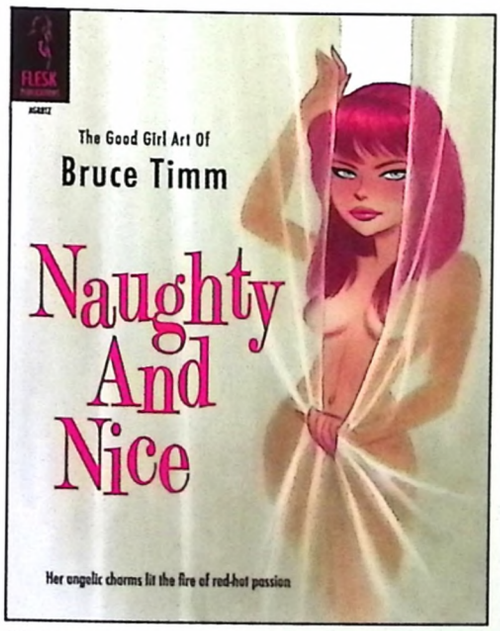

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Walt in his office at Illustration House, South Norwalk, 1978

illustrators contributed and were pleased to be asked. We very quickly had promises and donations of lots of artwork. The whole project was a genuine, spontaneous, and altruistic effort. One day a family in New Jersey contacted Steve Dohanos. Their father had been a turn-of-the-century art director for *The Associated Sunday Magazines*. He had been one of the early sponsors of Joseph Clement Coll. He had also acquired artworks by almost everybody who had ever worked for the company, like Charles Livingston Bull (1874-1932). So the family had all of these pictures and they were interested in selling them to the New Britain Museum. The *Associated Sunday Magazines* was an independent newspaper syndicate, in competition with the Hearst syndicate, which supplied material to newspapers across the country. Steve asked me if I would go with him to look at this collection. We went and I was flabbergasted, but Steve was not. These illustrations were too early for his tastes. He picked out about five or six pieces for the New Britain Museum to acquire, but there were about 300 more that he was not interested in. At first the family turned down his offer, because they wanted to sell the entire collection for a lump sum."

After 30 years of collecting material for his folio of American illustrators, Walt Reed had reached an interesting moment in the development of art appreciation. He and Stevan Dohanos were both dedicated professionals, but Walt could see this collection in a different light than Steve. Walt's extensive hobby of cataloging classic illustration art had obviously helped him to develop a viewpoint that was unique and ahead of its time.

"I saw it very differently! In their defense, the museum collection should be only the best of the artists' work. Dohanos

had already turned down a Rockwell from one art collector, because he felt the work was not his best. In any event, I recognized a lot of these early illustrators, who had long-since died, and whose work had not been published for 40 years or so. We went back to New Britain at the next meeting and Steve reported on what we had found. The committee agreed with Steve that they were only interested in certain items. At that time illustration art was hardly collected at all. It was not even recognized as having much value, so we were accustomed to getting things for free. The committee decided they would authorize the purchase only if the family was willing to sell the ones that Steve was interested in. So Steve went through that process and talked the family into it and he bought those few pieces, but I kept thinking about the rest of them. The family wanted a lump sum for the whole collection, so I wrote to them and said. 'Well, I can't do *that* much, but I can afford *this* much.' They were not all masterpieces by any means, but they were all published pieces, so I ended up buying them. Although it was a large collection, in number you could fit most of them into a single portfolio. There were no works on canvas. They were all on illustration board, so there was not a problem with housing the collection. I brought it back to Bill Fletcher's office headquarters for North Light and kept it there. The works by J. C. Coll interested me the most. I used some of the images in book projects, but mostly I was using these pictures to trade with other collectors who were interested in building a private collection of great classic American illustration art. I didn't have an especially mercenary motive, but I liked to have artwork around me to study by artists I liked. It certainly wasn't a formal decision to start to assemble my own art collection, but it just kind of grew. I knew several people who had a similar interest to mine. Ben Eisenstat (1915-2001) in Philadelphia, Mort Kunstler (b.1931) on Long island, Murray Tinkelman (b.1933). Quite a few other people were interested in the old illustrators. We would get together. I would go to Philadelphia or they would come to New York or Westport and bring a few things to trade.

"It was Mort who said, 'You ought to publish a catalog to help sell these pictures, and to meet more people who are interested.' I thought to myself, 'Yeah, I could do that.' So I self-published a ten or twelve page booklet. It was an experiment, but the timing was good. There was an active interest among the few people I was trading with. The first newsletter I sent out brought back a number of phone calls and sales. I kept a very small overhead. I wasn't really a businessman, and I still don't consider myself a businessman even now. I had more than 100 paintings by that time, but things just came along as they came along. Mainly it gave me access to pictures that I could collect for myself, but also that I could find new homes for these other pictures. "

The community of artists in Westport had a formal club, called the *Westport Artists*. There were club memberships, officers, and monthly get-togethers. Each member paid dues to cover minor costs, such as mailings and mimeographed announcements. Artists gathered together and talked shop. The average attendance was around fifty artists. They also

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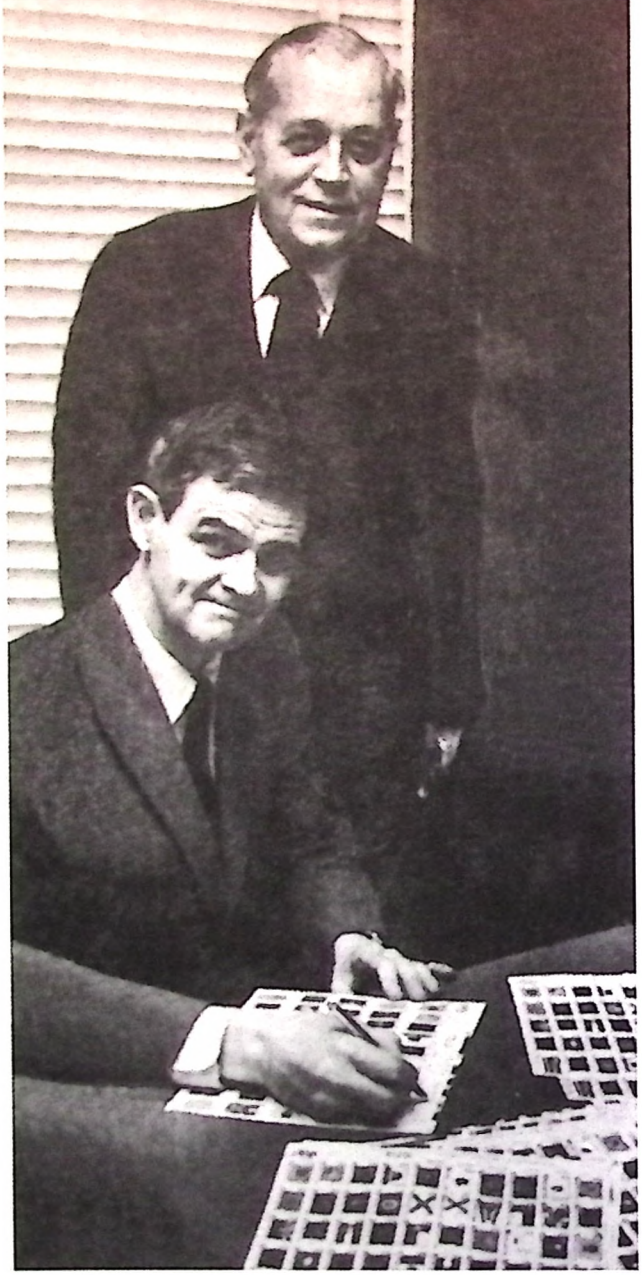
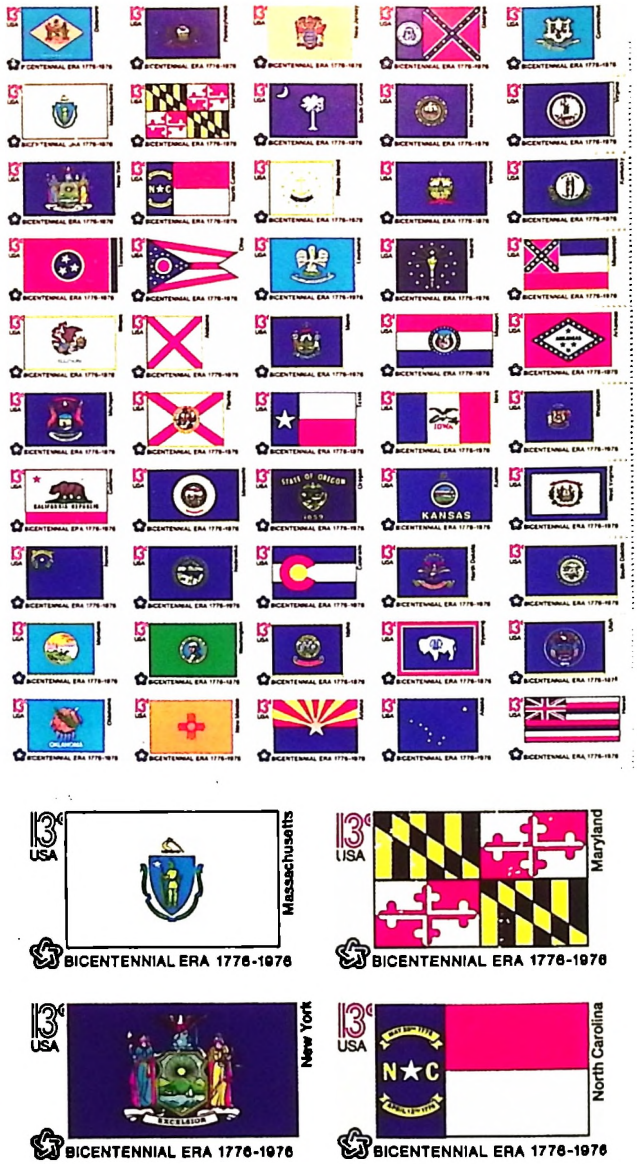


Walt Reed and Stevan Dohanos peruse Walt's postage stamp designs, March 1976



ABOVE: Walt's 50 postage stamp designs, with detail

arranged scheduled lectures by notable artists, which included art exhibitions.

"I remember one of the meetings when Tom Lovell got up and said, 'I don't know if you guys realize it, but you should not save your originals, because your estate will have to pay a huge tax on them, and the IRS will assess the values based on what you were paid for them by the magazines.' He said, 'You should destroy your work to protect your family.' A number of artists actually followed his advice afterwards! Lovell was paid thousands to do his illustrations, and he was concerned that after he died and his property would be transferred to his widow, she would receive an incredible tax bill. Suddenly the artists were thinking about how to get the art out of their estate. This created a demand for someone in the community to open an art gallery. Various artists, who were willing to consign as much work as I could sell for them, approached me. Their pictures were all consigned to me on their behalf for incredibly low figures. There was no established price level and we just guesstimated what to charge. But it worked out well, because I had access to Robert Fawcett's artwork, and Harold Von Schmidt's artwork and Tom Lovell's. All top people. So in 1974 I started an art gallery.

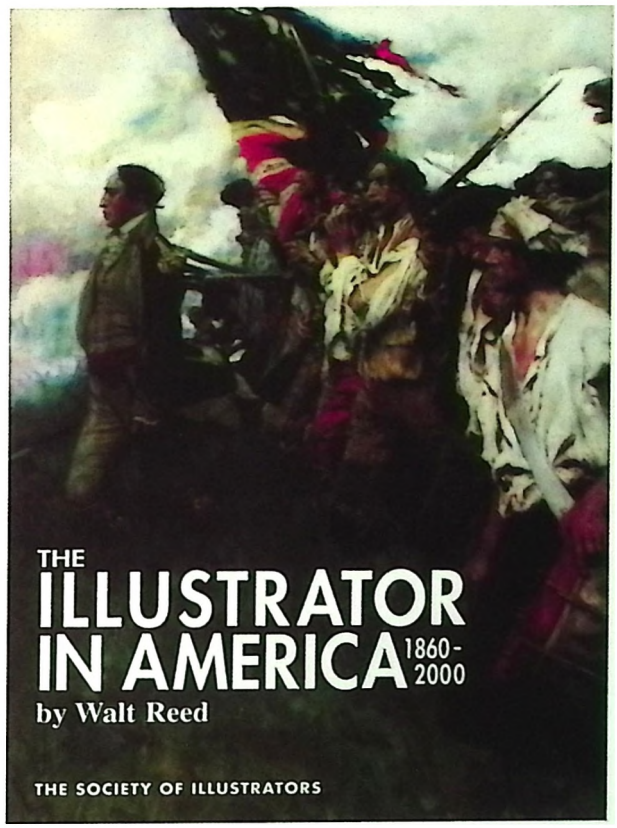
"The name of my art business at that time was Illustration House. I got that name from Terri Card, a lady I first met in the 1950s. She had a store in New York City named Manados Book Shop. She had opened it years earlier when illustrations were *really* cheap. A lot of the things she sold were Remington originals and Howard Pyle paintings, but it was mostly a bookstore with pictures hanging around on the walls. Sort of like *The Olde Print Shop* over on Lexington Avenue. She was a real expert on Remington. I think she got her start when she took over an estate collection of Remington's work. She had

some priceless stuff. In fact it was Norman Rockwell who first told me about her shop. It was uptown on Lexington Avenue. I went up to visit it around 1955. Among other things, she had sold maybe 40 or 50 Howard Pyle originals that were rescued from the city dump, where they had been thrown away by Harper's Publishing House. Rockwell bought a Pyle and an A.B. Frost and works by some others from her. By the time I arrived most of the great art had already been sold, but I did buy her catalog so I was able to see what had once been available. Anyway, I got to know her. She was a very nice lady and dedicated to illustration art. Eventually she had to move, because the rents were too high, and she moved to a farmhouse upstate, not too far from the city. She had all this stuff in a big barn. She called it *Illustration House*. That was when I was still working on the first edition of my illustration book and I was able to get from her the copper plates for Pyle's illustrations. I borrowed three sets of those plates. Miss Card died not long afterwards in 1969. Much of her estate was eventually acquired by the Glenbow Museum in Canada. Since her business was closed, I was free to use the name Illustration House. I was still working with Bill Fletcher at North Light. It was a two-story building and the upstairs was not being used, so I had an impromptu closet and desk up there, where I stored all these things for my fledgling art gallery."

While Walt was exploring his options as an art dealer he was still finding freelance illustration work. One of his last assignments was also his most impressive. During the 1976 bicentennial celebrations, he was commissioned by the U.S. Postal Service to create a sheet of stamps to commemorate the 50 state flags. Each flag appeared on the sheet in the order in which they entered the Union. The flag of Delaware, the Union's first state, appeared in the upper left corner and the Hawaiian state flag appeared in the lower right corner. This was the first time the USPS ever produced a sheet of stamps with fifty *different* images. This ground-breaking format has since become commonplace, but at the time it was a controversial innovation.

"From an early age I was a stamp collector and particularly followed the American commemorative issues. At that time the standard procedure was to print a pane of 50 stamps with 50 duplicate images. After Hawaii became the 50th state, it occurred to me that it would be neat to put all fifty different state flags on one sheet. I tried it out with a dummy, which looked promising, and took the idea to Stevan Dohanos, who liked it. Steve had done many stamps himself, and was the Design Coordinator for the Postmaster General's Citizens' Stamp Advisory Committee. He presented my dummy for their consideration and got their acceptance! It then took many months to do all the finished artwork. During that time there were even several incremental changes in the cost for first class stamps from six cents to 13 cents. It was quite an honor when the sheet was finally issued, even though a disgruntled group of stamp collectors awarded my design a 'Black Blot,' because they objected to the added cost of buying a full sheet to fill fifty spaces in their stamp albums!"

By 1978, Walt Reed's homemade art gallery was a growing

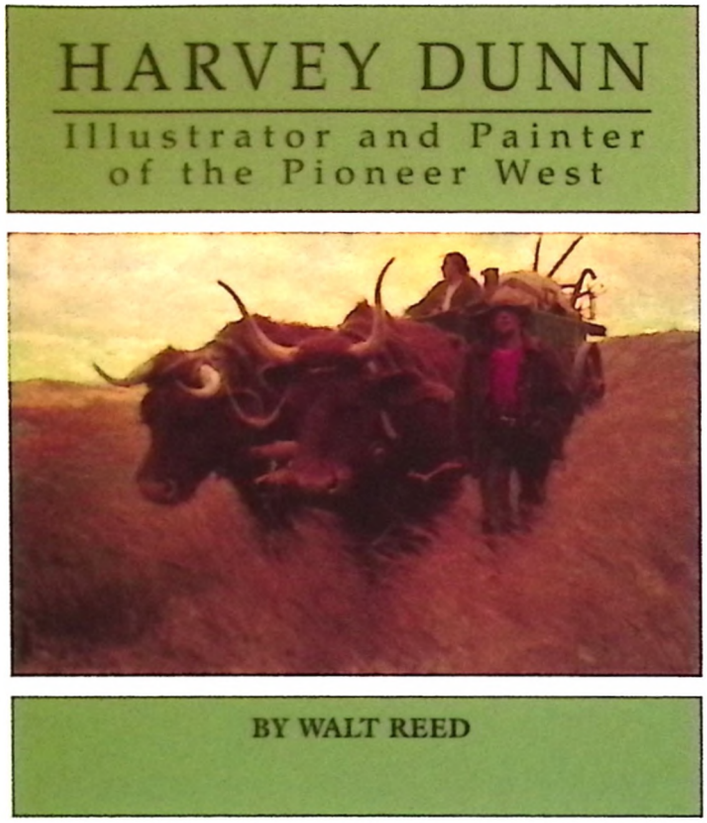


The Illustrator In America: 1860–2000, The Society of Illustrators, 2001

concern, so he decided to open a professional business space. He moved out of the second floor of Bill Fletcher's North Light, and into a building in South Norwalk. At the time the area was suffering economically and rents were affordable. He found a third-floor space in a building for $200 a month. Norwalk and Westport abut each other, so it was only a five-minute drive from his home.

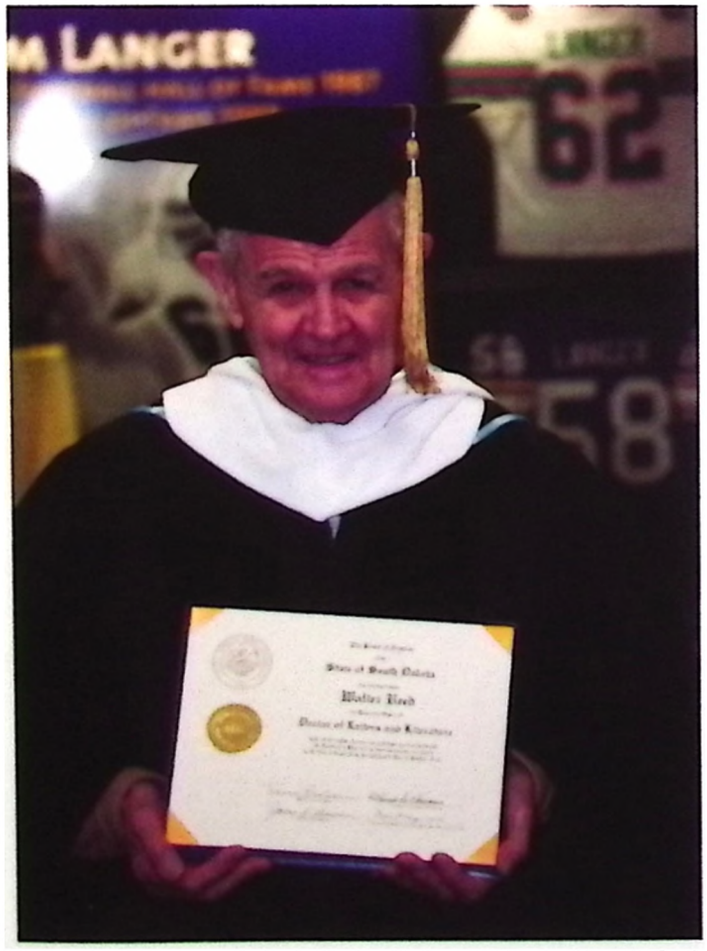
"In fact I still went over to the Westport Y to play handball every day. My wife would come in on weekends and do the books and I would usually have some visitors over the weekend. Our new location gave us a lot more space and we began to produce a more elaborate catalog. We also made contacts by phone and mail. As time went on I needed help and I talked to my oldest son, Geoffrey, who had finished college at Cooper Union. I explained the situation. He was tempted, but he decided not. My younger son, Roger, eventually decided to give it a try. By then I had access to so much material! Cornwell artwork was coming on the market. It was being thrown away! Someone would come in with two halves of a Cornwell painting that had been torn in half and trashed! At that time illustration art didn't have much established market value. I was sort of guessing what price would be appropriate. I was setting prices that were very affordable. Our sales were okay. The photos of the paintings in the newsletter did most of the work.

"Charles Martignette used to visit our business in Norwalk early on. We did a lot of business with him. His idea was to gain control of the market. At that point we had lots of Henry



Harvey Dunn: Illustrator and Painter of the Pioneer West, Flesk Publications, 2010

Walt signs copies of *Harvey Dunn: Illustrator and Painter of the Pioneer West* at the South Dakota Art Museum, December 10, 2010. The museum houses the largest collection of original art by Harvey Dunn. Photo courtesy of John Fleskes, © 2011



Walt receives his honorary doctorate "Doctor of Letters and Literature" from the South Dakota State University, Saturday, December 11, 2010. (Note that his legal name is not Walter, but Walt.) Photo courtesy of John Fleskes, © 2011

Raleigh (1880-1944) illustrations, and he would say, 'Well, I would like to buy enough of these so I could corner the market, and then *I* could set the prices.' He more or less accomplished that. Charles was a character. If he couldn't get his way he would almost throw a tantrum! I would finally say, 'Well, okay, Charles.' And then he would snap out of it and smile. It was all an act. He was never dull. It always seemed paradoxical to me that he was so obsessed with pin-up art, and yet he could be as attracted as he was to Harvey Dunn. At the time he discovered Dunn he had quite a lot of money to play with, so he started buying it. That has had a big effect on the Dunn market, and I'm sure it will continue to have an effect in the future. Charles also had a lot of good Dean Cornwell art in his collection."

Walt Reed continued to work on updated editions of *The Illustrator in America* The second edition came out in 1984. In 1987 he and Roger Reed moved Illustration House to Soho, where they were the only art dealers handling illustration art in New York City's famous gallery district. Two years later they began scheduled auctions. Each event was accompanied by a larger and more impressive catalog. In 2000 the third edition of *The Illustrator in America* was released. In 2003 Illustration House followed the art crowd up to a new and expanded location in the fashionable Chelsea district at 110 West 25th Street.

"I never could have handled all of these business challenges without Roger. I've never thought of myself as a businessman. Things were going well and then suddenly there was a recession and nobody was buying anything. You know, the premature death of Charles Martignette had a huge impact on

the market. We went through a few tough years when things were stretched pretty thin. Sometimes it's a struggle, but we still enjoy what we're doing. Lately we've been asked to handle the collections of several important estates, and we've been working with a few new collectors who are very serious about building important collections of illustration art. So, things are looking up again."

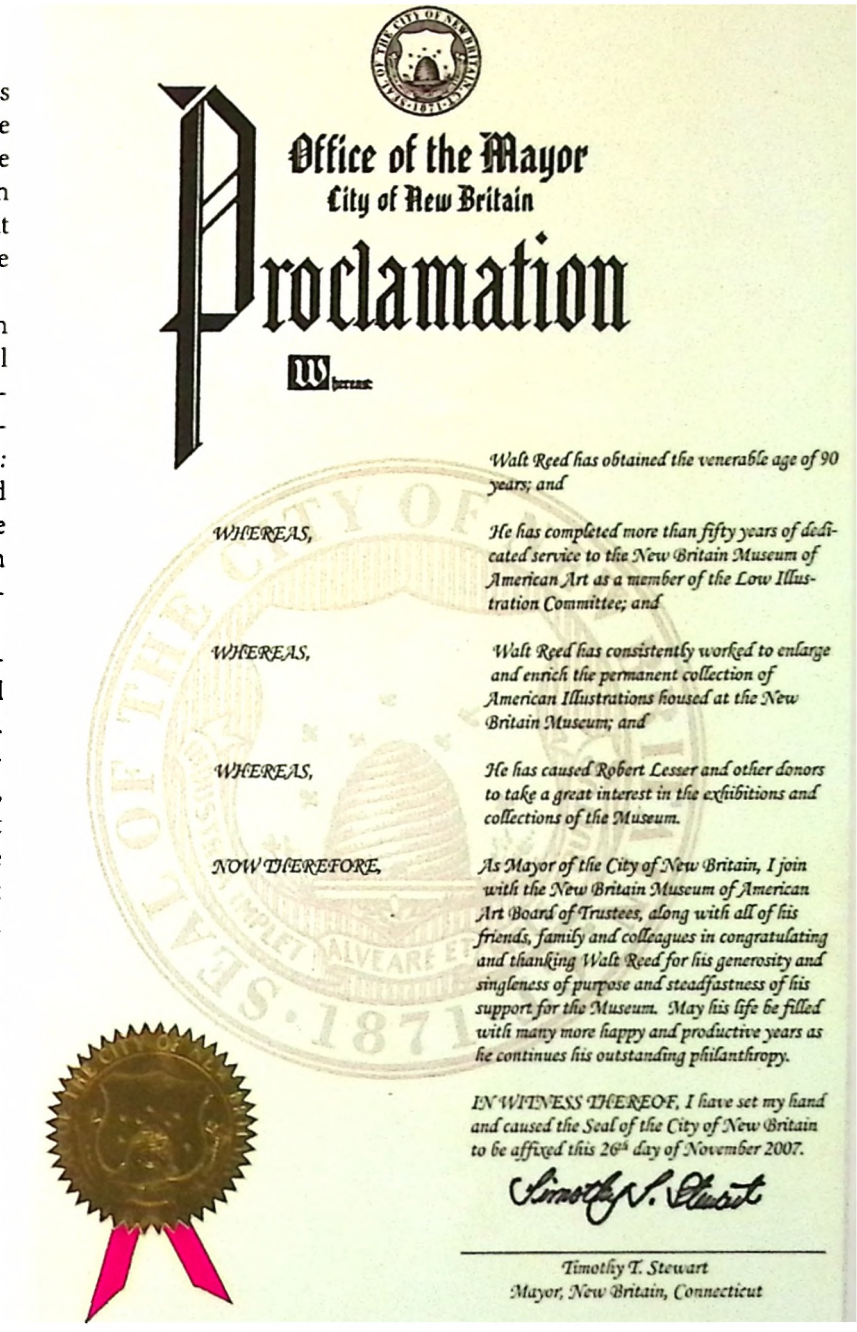
Today Illustration House has a young enthusiastic staff with college interns and a team of talented web designers, who will soon launch a new website with online auctions. Several museums around the country have asked their advice on strengthening their collections. Walt Reed's latest book, *Harvey Dunn: Illustrator and Painter of the Pioneer West*, has been released by Flesk Publications in conjunction with an exhibition at The South Dakota Art Museum. During the exhibition the South Dakota State University awarded Walt Reed an honorary doctorate in arts and letters.

Dr. Walt Reed has a unique perspective on recent developments in the art market, as illustration art has increased in value and entered a wider range of important collections. After the dust has settled on today's exciting market, connoisseurs will determine the artistic merit of certain illustrators, whose names will be added to the permanent canon of great American artists. The merit within each artwork has yet to be responsibly determined by authoritative historians. Without a doubt Walt Reed has already laid the groundwork for that scholarly process.

"Several university scholars have visited us with research projects over the last few years. College thesis writers look for help, and some people who are doing books come in. We make our files and reference library available. These sorts of inquiries would have never happened before. Hopefully their efforts will have an impact on the culture. The doctoral programs at several colleges, such as Stony Brook University in New York, the University of Hartford in Connecticut, and Washington University in St. Louis, now recognize illustration as a valid subject of American art history. Some of their art history students have chosen illustration art as the topic for their doctoral thesis. Syracuse University now has an advanced course in illustration art, which includes illustration techniques as well as illustration art history. Many illustration instructors bring their classes to preview exhibitions at Illustration House. The field is changing so incredibly. It is hard to predict the future opportunities and the challenges for art students. Most current illustration is created through computers or embellished photos. Often there is no original beyond an image saved on a disk. We are going through an electronic age that doesn't really involve the same kinds of artistic creativity that we've known previously. At the same time, we have seen over the years an incredible change in attitude toward illustration as art, which makes us very happy! We like to see illustration receive the critical acclaim it deserves."

The market for illustration art has grown prodigiously since the 1930s, when Walt Reed first thought about assembling an unwieldy folio of classic American illustrators. His thoughtful effort to chronicle that history has added greatly to the knowledge of today's collectors, who have sent prices soaring through the roof. One clear indication of the health of today's market is that all major auction houses now have departments that handle illustration art. Most collectors are proud to see the blue-chip market getting involved, but all expertise is just a lightweight Google search compared to his depth of knowledge. Thank goodness Walt Reed has freely contributed his life's work to the common benefit of everyone who loves classic illustration art.

—by David Saunders, 2011



Office of the Mayor
City of New Britain

Proclamation

WHEREAS, *Walt Reed has obtained the venerable age of 90 years; and*

He has completed more than fifty years of dedicated service to the New Britain Museum of American Art as a member of the Low Illustration Committee; and

WHEREAS, *Walt Reed has consistently worked to enlarge and enrich the permanent collection of American Illustrations housed at the New Britain Museum; and*

WHEREAS, *He has caused Robert Lesser and other donors to take a great interest in the exhibitions and collections of the Museum.*

NOW THEREFORE, *As Mayor of the City of New Britain, I join with the New Britain Museum of American Art Board of Trustees, along with all of his friends, family and colleagues in congratulating and thanking Walt Reed for his generosity and singleness of purpose and steadfastness of his support for the Museum. May his life be filled with many more happy and productive years as he continues his outstanding philanthropy.*

IN WITNESS THEREOF, I have set my hand and caused the Seal of the City of New Britain to be affixed this 26th day of November 2007.

Timothy T. Stewart
Mayor, New Britain, Connecticut

The city of New Britain, Connecticut, honors Walt Reed for a lifetime of service, 2007

Thanks to Walt Reed and his family, Fritz Henning, Barbara Holzhausen Belarski, Howard Munce, Katie Chase of the Westport Historical Society, Douglas Hyland, Director of the New Britain Museum of American Art, George Bollas and Magdalen Livesey of Cortina Learning International, Inc. and Paul Schlotthauer of the Pratt Institute Library. Special thanks to John Fleskes for providing photos of Walt Reed at the South Dakota Art Museum.

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Frank E. Schoonover illustrated more than 150 classic books and hundreds of the great illustrated magazines of his day. More than five million readers every month saw his illustrations of the fiction of Jack London and Zane Grey, and he was the first to visualize the legendary western character Hopalong Cassidy. This 45-minute biographical documentary on DVD introduces viewers to the history of American illustration, and to the life story of a mostly unheralded illustrator whose iconic renderings of adventurous life help define American popular culture at the start of the 20th century.

Dramatic reenactments shot in the wilderness regions of Wyoming, the Canadian North, and the Delaware River in Eastern Pennsylvania are underscored with the music of Aaron Copeland to entertainingly recreate the subjects Frank Schoonover loved first—horses and dog sleds, buckskins and snowshoes, holsters and knives, prairie grass and ice.

But Frank Schoonover's creative vision transcended the pop culture mandates he and contemporaries such as Howard Pyle and N.C. Wyeth obliged. Schoonover's moody monochromatic sketches of boys toiling in coal mines and girls laboring in textile mills are visionary social commentary that reinforces how art can be a catalyst for social change.

THANKSGIVING: AN ILLUSTRATED HISTORY

COMPILED BY JOHN WESLEY THOMAS AND SANDRA LYNN THOMAS
160 PAGES, FULL COLOR
$29.95 SOFTCOVER
SCHIFFER BOOKS, 2011

Enjoy Thanksgiving and all the trimmings in this new collection documenting the visual history of the beloved American holiday—from the Pilgrims' first observance to the present. The book features reproductions of over 700 illustrated newspapers, postcards, prints, and magazine covers from popular publications such as *Life*, *Harper's Weekly*, *The Ladies Home Journal*, *The Saturday Evening Post*, and many more. Gather around the table and view some of the iconic Thanksgiving symbols such as turkeys, pumpkins, and bountiful meals which have been delightfully illustrated throughout the years. History lovers and collectors will find this charming collection a valuable resource as well as an entertaining reminder of days gone-by.

DRAWING POWER: A COMPENDIUM OF CARTOON ADVERTISING, 1870s–1940s

EDITED BY RICK MARSCHALL & WARREN BERNARD
128 PAGES, FULL COLOR
$28.99 SOFTCOVER
FANTAGRAPHICS, 2011

The history of the genre known as Cartoon Advertising is addressed for the first time in this oversized, full-color, 128-page, fully-illustrated book *Drawing Power*. "There are many obscure masterpieces to be found lingering at the intersection of American commerce and comic art," says co-editor Rick Marschall. *Drawing Power* covers the years from the Gilded Age and the pioneer illustrated magazines of the 1870s to the 1940s, just before America's entry into World War II.

This landmark volume features the art of many iconic cartoonists whose work, due to the ephemeral nature of advertising itself, has generally been lost to history. There are examples by Thomas Nast, Joseph Keppler, F Opper, Bud Fisher, George Herriman, John Held, Jr., Charles Dana Gibson, Percy Crosby, Peter Arno, Gluyas Williams, Milton Caniff and over 60 other cartoonists. Generous portfolios are devoted to the substantial work in the genre by R.F. Outcault, Dr. Seuss, and others.

Many famous products, campaigns and slogans—but also forgotten gadgets and outrageous claims—are found in *Drawing Power*. Dr. Scott's Electric Cigarettes; Yellow Kid cigars; the Campbell Soup Kids; Rose O'Neill's Jello-O ads; Snap, Crackle, and Pop; Little Orphan Annie's Ovaltine; Mr Coffee Nerves; they are all here! Other "pitchmen" include Popeye, Mickey Mouse, Barney Google, Walt & Skeezix, and more.

AL JAFFEE'S MAD LIFE

BY AL JAFFEE AND MARY-LOU WEISMAN
240 PAGES, FULL COLOR
$27.99 HARDCOVER
IT BOOKS, 2010

Al Jaffee's inventive work has enlivened the pages of *MAD* since 1955. While his art has made him a cultural icon, the compelling and at times bizarre story of his life has yet to be told. A synopsis of Jaffee's formative years alone reads like a comic strip of traumatic cliff-hangers, with cartoons by Jaffee and captions by Freud. Six-year-old Jaffee was separated from his father, uprooted from his home in Savannah, Georgia, and transplanted by his mother to a shtetl in Lithuania, a nineteenth-century world of kerosene lamps, outhouses, physical abuse, and near starvation. He would be rescued by his father, returned to America, taken yet again by his mother back to the shtetl, and once again rescued by his father, even as Hitler was on the march. When he finally settled back in America as a twelve-year-old wearing cobbled shoes and speaking his native English with a Yiddish accent, schoolmates called him "greenhorn." His luck changed when he was chosen to be a member of the first class to attend New York City's High School of Music and Art. There his artistic ability saved him. He would go on to forge relationships with Stan Lee, Harvey Kurtzman, and Will Elder, launching a career that would bring him to *MAD* magazine. There he found himself at the forefront of a movement that would change the face of humor and cartooning in America.

THE MAD FOLD-IN COLLECTION: 1964-2010

BY AL JAFFEE, WITH ESSAYS BY PETE DOCTER, JULES FEIFFER, AND NEIL GENZLINGER
832 PAGES, FULL COLOR
$125.00 4 HARDCOVER VOLUMES IN SLIPCASE
CHRONICLE BOOKS, 2011

Al Jaffee's fold-ins, on the inside back cover of virtually every issue of *MAD* Magazine since 1964, have become an icon of American humor. Generations have grown up with Jaffee's inspired skewerings of our foibles and cultural conundrums. Issue after issue, each Fold-in required the reader to simply fold the page so that arrow A would meet arrow B to reveal the hidden gag image, a simple idea that masks both undeniable artistic ingenuity and comic timing. In this deluxe four-volume set, each of the 410 fold-ins is reproduced at its original size, with a digital representation of the corresponding "folded" image on the following page (so collectors won't have to "fold" their book to get the jokes). Featuring insightful essays by such luminaries as Pixar's Pete Docter and humorist Jules Feiffer, *The MAD Fold-In Collection* is the definitive gift for the millions of fans who've grown up with *MAD* for nearly 60 years.

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EXHIBITIONS & EVENTS

Howard Pyle: American Master Rediscovered

November 12 through March 4, 2012
The Delaware Art Museum, DE

Howard Pyle: American Master Rediscovered is the first comprehensive, critical assessment of the influential artist who is often referred to as the grandfather of American illustration.

When Howard Pyle died in 1911, he left behind an extensive body of over 3,000 works of art and a lasting legacy of inspired teaching. This exhibition features an outstanding selection of the artist's best known and rarely seen paintings, drawings, prints, and archival materials that shed light on the artist's career as a painter and a consummate storyteller in a changing world at the cusp of the 20th century. Admired by Norman Rockwell and his contemporaries, Pyle's exacting working methods resulted in the creation of artworks of singular beauty and refinement, with innovative compositional structures. His extraordinary skill was strengthened by his conviction that illustration was an act of self-revelation, and he encouraged students like N.C. Wyeth, Jessie Willcox Smith, and Frank Schoonover to understand their subjects by living them. The artist's powerful paintings of pirates and historical and literary themes continue to spark the imagination, as reflected in the works on view.

For more information, visit: www.delart.org

Heroes and Villians: The Comic Book Art of Alex Ross

October 1 through January 8, 2012
The Andy Warhol Museum, PA

Considered one of the greatest artists in the field of comic books, Alex Ross has revitalized classic superheroes into works of fine art with his brilliant use of watercolor. Just as Andy Warhol elevated soup can labels into multi-million dollar artworks, Ross has transformed comic books. By building on the foundation of the great artists who came before him—Jack Kirby, Steve Ditko, John Romita, Neal Adams, George Perez, and others—Ross' paintings have revolutionized the comic book industry and transcended the newsstand origins of his profession.

Paintings and sketches from his early career from projects like *Marvels* and *Kingdom Come* will be included, as well as works from more recent projects, such as *Justice*, *Flash Gordon*, and *Green Hornet*.

Showcasing the heavy influence of American illustration and Pop Art on Ross, works by Andy Warhol, Norman Rockwell, Andrew Loomis, and J.C. Leyendecker will be included. As Andy Warhol was also a comic book fan, the museum will have a selection of comic books and related paraphernalia collected by Warhol throughout his life.

This show will be the first museum exhibition of Ross' work and will comprise 5,500 square feet of gallery space.

For more information, visit: www.warhol.org

Making Faces

September 1 through November 23, 2011
The Society of Illustrators, NY

The Society of Illustrators presents a selection of works from their Permanent Collection, featuring portraits and caricatures by artists such as William Oberhardt, Everett Raymond Kinstler, James Montgomery Flagg, Andy Warhol, and many more.

For more information, visit: www.societyillustrators.org

Growing Every Which Way But Up: The Children's Book Art of Jules Feiffer

October 25 through January 22, 2012
The Eric Carle Museum of Picture Book Art, MA

This exhibition focuses on Jules Feiffer's equally prodigious talents as an author and illustrator of children's books. Book-ended by his collaborations with Norton Juster—*The Phantom Tollbooth* (1961) and *The Odious Ogre* (2010)—the exhibition focuses on Feiffer's own books, from *I'm Not Bobby!* and *By the Side of the Road*, where Feiffer heralds "to heck with grownups," to *Bark, George* where he aimed at taking the lid off the excessive worry.

For more information, visit: www.carlemuseum.org

Know of any upcoming exhibitions or events related to the world of classic illustration? Email: illomag@gmail.com

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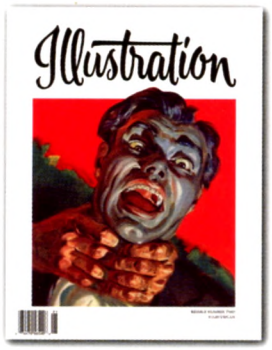

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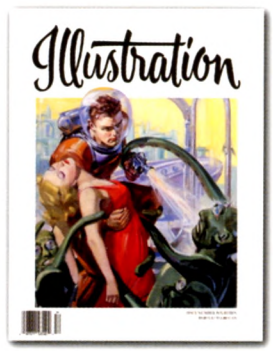

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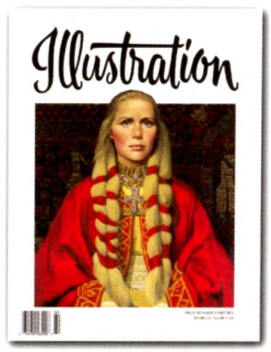

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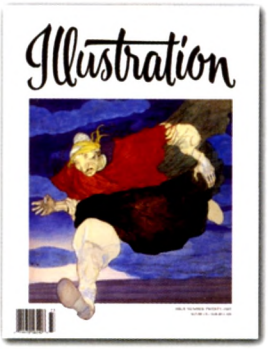

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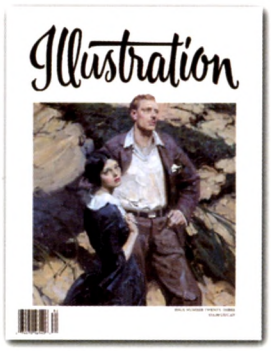

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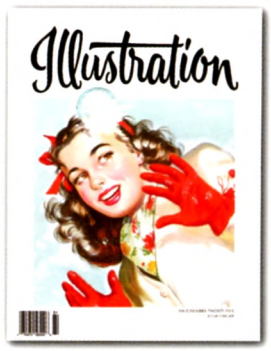

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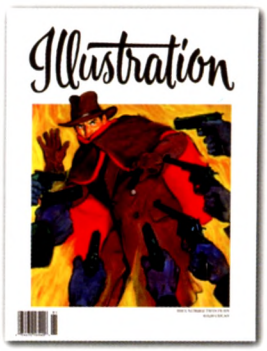

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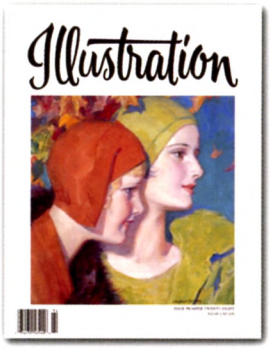

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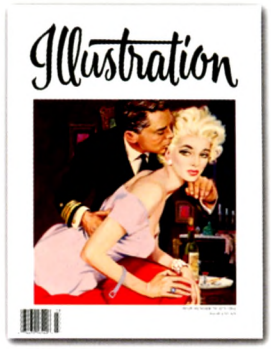

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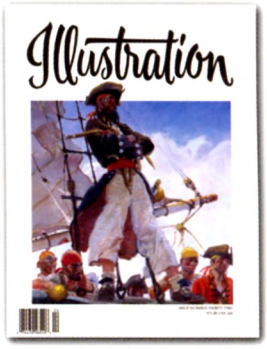

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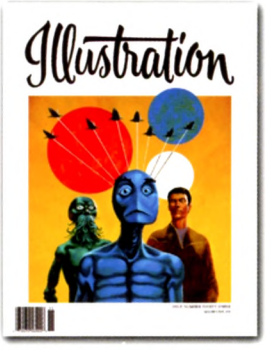

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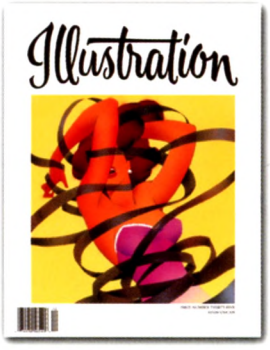

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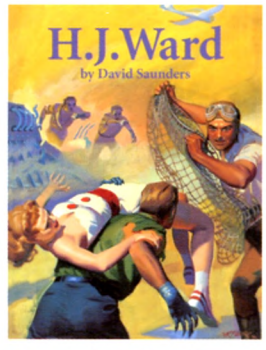

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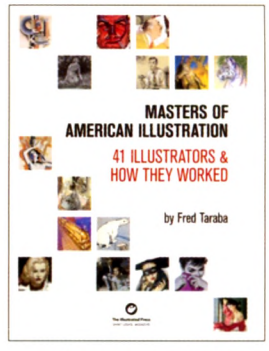

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